

107
DEVELOPMENTS IN TAJIKISTAN

Y 4.F 76/1:T 13/13

Developments in Tajikistan, 103-2 H...

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

SEPTEMBER 22, 1994

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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CONTENTS

WITNESS

	Page
Mr. Joseph Presel, Coordinator for Regional Affairs, Office of the Ambassador-at-Large for the New Independent States	3
Mr. Davlat Khudonazarov, former Presidential candidate in 1991, and fellow of the United States Institute for Peace	18
Dr. Barnett Rubin, professor, Columbia University and director, Center for the Study of Central Asia, and acting director, Center for Preventive Diplomacy, Council on Foreign Relations	20
Mr. Anthony H. Richter, senior advisor to the president, Soros Foundation	22
Ms. Holly Burkhalter, Washington Director, Human Rights Watch	25

APPENDIX

Prepared statements:	
Mr. Joseph Presel	37
Mr. Davlat Khudonazarov	40
Dr. Barnett Rubin	44
Mr. Anthony H. Richter	49
Ms. Holly Burkhalter	61
Mr. L.K. Kayumov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations	71

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

American Red Cross Situation Report on Tajikistan	73
Analysis conducted by Internews, the Media in Tajikistan	89
Mr. Arthur Helton, director of migration programs, Open Society Institute, prepared statement	97

DEVELOPMENTS IN TAJIKISTAN

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Robert E. Andrews, presiding.

Mr. ANDREWS. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We appreciate your attention and interest. We are pleased to have assembled such an outstanding panel of witnesses to be with us this morning.

I am especially pleased to be joined by my colleague, Congressman Hastings from Florida. I would hope that other members of the subcommittee will be joining us as the morning proceeds. I know many of you here are veterans of the hearing process and need not receive this explanation, but for those of you who are new to it, please do not assume that the absence of members of the subcommittee indicates their lack of interest or concern. Members of Congress serve on numerous committees and subcommittees, and one thing Congress has not figured out how to do yet is to schedule itself so you don't have to be three places at the same time. Many of the members are involved in other hearings and other legislative business. They may be coming in and out.

Let me also say that if they come in and out during testimony or during a question period, the witnesses should not assume any lack of respect or interest as well. It is simply a matter of the very busy times that we have.

I would like to begin with a brief opening statement, but before I do that, I will defer to my colleague from Florida and ask Congressman Hastings if he would like to make a statement.

Mr. HASTINGS. I'll be even more brief than that, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for organizing this hearing. I would only like to say that I know very little about Tajikistan, but I do know that there is a growing concern regarding human rights violations, and I have a continuing interest in the subject of human rights violations throughout the world, and I thought in the interests of this committee, as well as others that I serve on, that I be here so that I can learn as much as possible.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much, Congressman Hastings.

WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME OF INCREDIBLE IRONY

I think we are living in a time of incredible irony, and the irony is the contrast between what we feared in the past and what we dread today. In the past if you would have told me, on the day that I took office as a Member of Congress in 1990, that by the end of my second term the Soviet Union would no longer exist on the map of the world, that the debate about Central Asia or about Eastern Europe or these parts of the world would be about how quickly to democratize and move toward a capitalist system, if you would have told me that we would have this hearing today involving an Independent Republic of Tajikistan, I would have said that that was impossible, that these were pipe dreams that could not possibly come true.

We are living in the midst of great revolutionary change in the world. These are times that our children and grandchildren will read about as great moments in history. What we used to fear and dread—the threat of global superpower conflict—has largely been diminished and is not a topic of international concern today. Ironically, however, new sources of dread and new sources of worry confront us every day: old ethnic hostilities that once again bubble up, the uncertainty of trying to organize or reorganize economies that suffered in the period of transition, breaking new ground every day in creating new democratic institutions in countries around the world that have no democratic tradition, and finally, the problems of consistent violations of human rights in parts of the world that, as Congressman Hastings said, too often go unnoticed and untalked about.

There seems to be a proportionate relationship that the more publicity a country gets, the more serious its human rights abuses are considered. The less publicity a country gets, the less serious its human rights abuses are considered. I believe, and I think I am joined in this belief by virtually all Members of the House of Representatives, that a human rights violation is inherently important, no matter where it takes place, no matter under what kind of system it takes place. If one person is suffering or persecuted because of their religious beliefs, their political beliefs, their race, their ethnicity, their gender, if one person suffers as a result of those points, then it is worthy of our attention and concern, and that is why we are here today.

We are going to hear from a panel of distinguished witnesses about what has happened in Tajikistan in recent times, what is happening today, what may happen in the future, what should happen in the future, and we want to begin our testimony this morning. We are very pleased to have with us from the U.S. Department of State the Coordinator for Regional Affairs from the Office of the Ambassador-at-Large for the New Independent States, Mr. Joseph Presel.

Welcome, Mr. Presel. We are happy to have you with us, and the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH PRESEL, COORDINATOR FOR REGIONAL AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF THE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE FOR THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATES

Mr. PRESEL. Thank you, sir. I have a very short formal statement which I would like to submit for the record, and while it is only three pages, I will summarize it even more briefly.

Mr. ANDREWS. Without objection, your statement will become a part of the record.

Mr. PRESEL. I would like to thank you, first of all, sir, for holding these hearings. It is a very good time, I think, to have these hearings since things are in fact happening in Tajikistan. There is the possibility of elections and a constitutional referendum, a cease-fire has been announced, and we hope it will soon be able to take hold.

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF ASSISTANCE THAT THE SUFFERING PEOPLE OF TAJIKISTAN REQUIRE

There is a great deal of assistance that the suffering people of Tajikistan require. In a word, there is a lot of work for all of us. I think it is probably fair to say that of all of the countries that emerged from the debris of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan is probably the least well provided for. Economically, it was probably the poorest. It has unfortunately a somewhat limited sense of self as a country. It is a tremendous mixture. It is a sociologist's paradise, a mixture of ethnic groups, a mixture of languages, it is geographically an improbability. It is easier to get from one part of Tajikistan to another by way of a different country than going directly.

And unfortunately it is likely to remain poor. Its economic potential is in such things as electrogeneration and minerals, all of which require tremendous amounts of capital. Its politics are likely to remain clan based, perfectly sensible politics, but different from ours, and unfortunately practically since it became an independent country it has been riven by war, first by civil war, and now by a kind of low level and occasionally higher level amount of violence which has required the Russians, at the invitation of the Tajik Government, to have fairly massive troops in there.

Its economy is insolvent. Its politics are, in a word, in a mess. It is a great shame.

THERE ARE FEW POSITIVE SIGNS

There are few positive signs. One sign is that there seems to have been reached an agreement between the government and the opposition for the postponement of Presidential elections and the holding of a constitutional referendum. It is paradoxical that postponing elections may be a positive sign. In this case we think it probably is. We think it probably is because it will allow, we hope, for rather better preparation, for a better range of candidates and it is meant now to be held on November 5.

A cease-fire has been agreed. Its implementation is contingent on several factors. It is meant to run, if implemented, through the elections. We hope that the elections will take place. It would be idle to pretend that these elections were going to resemble elections in Sweden which happened over the weekend. It is a different polit-

ical system with different political customs, but the fact of an election, an election providing choice is in itself a remarkable feat.

American involvement, official American involvement in the Tajik economy, has been limited to a very active embassy, very close coordination with the international groups that are there, both the NGO's and the representatives of the U.N., and of the CSCE. We are engaged in an aid program, a small aid program devoted almost exclusively to humanitarian assistance because that is what the situation most requires.

We hope that the political and economic situation will be such that we will be able in the future to offer more traditional forms of economic assistance. We feel that there is some reason for hope in Tajikistan. We hope that the situation, the dreadful situation economically, sociologically, politically has bottomed-out.

I can't say that we are excessively confident, but we very much hope that that is the case, and we certainly are doing what we can with our somewhat limited resources to help it, and I think that is all I would like to say at the beginning.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Presel appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Presel.

We will begin with questions from Congressman Hastings.

Mr. HASTINGS. I will be again, very brief, Mr. Chairman.

AMERICAN PRESENCE IN TAJIKISTAN

Mr. Presel, to what extent is the American presence felt in Tajikistan?

Mr. PRESEL. If I say what I would like to say, Congressman, it will probably sound like puffery on the part of the executive branch.

Mr. ANDREWS. We are used to it. Go ahead.

Mr. PRESEL. There is an exceedingly active embassy. It is very small. It is exceptionally well-qualified and professional, and perhaps because of the isolation I think the Dunkirk spirit reigns.

Access to all levels of Tajik society is, to the extent the security situation allows, perfectly natural. The Ambassador and his staff see people all the time. I think it probably is fair to say that Ambassador Escudero is one of the most well known and most easily recognized political figures in Tajikistan. If he walks down the street, I have seen this, the number of people that know who he is is astonishingly large.

They travel a lot. They see all sectors of society. There is, I think, an unfocused feeling that somehow the U.S. presence is itself an earnest of our willingness to help.

There are tremendous expectations inevitably as to what more we can do for them. In a country in which there is not a large number of foreign embassies, the very fact of an American Embassy staffed by people who speak either Russian or the dialect of Persian spoken in Tajikistan or both is a matter of some importance.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

Mr. HASTINGS. Very recently, Ambassador Escudero protested the closing of the one newspaper, and I guess it was a Russian language newspaper, and human rights organizations continue to report that Tajik journalists are regularly arrested, and I am sure

you are aware of the several cases that took place in August of that.

In general, human rights organizations report regular violations which they maintain are perpetrated by Islamist government forces and other warring clans alike. What is your assessment of the human rights situation and what are the prospects for improvement before the conflict has been settled?

Mr. PRESEL. To say that the human rights situation is from our perspective thoroughly unsatisfactory is to state the obvious. Even if we accept without admitting it publicly that it is unreasonable to hold a society and government like that of Tajikistan to as closely to the standards that we would hold countries with long traditions of political democracy, it is pretty clear that the situation is dreadful.

We do, the embassy does what it can, which is to say that the Ambassador goes in and spends a great deal of his life complaining about events which he has heard, of which he has been informed.

In addition to that, in what I think is an unusual example of cooperation, there are weekly meetings involving the nongovernmental organizations present in Dushanbe with the American Embassy and with the international organizations present there which provides kind of a clearinghouse for the various groups to tell each other what is going on. It is a very, very desirable system to use.

PRESENCE OF THE NGO'S HAS A DETERRENT EFFECT

The presence of the NGO's themselves has certainly somewhat of a deterrent effect, probably not as much of a deterrent fact, in fact certainly not as much of a deterrent effect as we would like, but they are there, and that does make a difference.

As to your second question, sir, how much improvement to expect, not, I am afraid, a great deal in the short period of time before the elections. To the extent that the attention of the West is turned on Tajikistan as a country, as a society, as a political entity, and people travel there before the elections, this will help. Journalists going there will help. Anything which turns the spotlight on them will help, but optimistic though I am, I cannot say that it is reasonable to expect in the 2 months roughly between now and the elections, not even that, there will be any major changes. I wish I were wrong.

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN TAJIKISTAN

Mr. HASTINGS. Right. I have but one other question, but I note that you left out what might possibly help those of us in Congress, so I gather that Congressman Andrews and I going to Tajikistan won't help. Nevertheless, we will probably try to go anyway.

To what extent do you feel that Russia is trying to reassert its influence, if not sovereignty, in Tajikistan, and is that going to be acceptable to the United States? That is my final question on this round, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PRESEL. I know better, Congressman, than to try to handle the statement you made before you asked me the question.

Mr. HASTINGS. I am going to try to go anyway.

Mr. PRESEL. Good. The question of Russian involvement is one of the three or four I think major concerns that we have. It is ter-

ribly hard for the political and economic leaders of any of the countries formerly in the Soviet Union to shake off their psychological dependence on Russia, on Moscow, on getting their orders. You know for 70 years they have been used to having it this way. It is getting on for three generations. I think the problem is exacerbated in Tajikistan by the clan-based nature of their polity, and while I think Russia has the gravest doubts about the long term desirability of supporting the Tajik economy and is probably worried about getting itself involved for the long term in Tajikistan to an excessive extent politically, they do feel, they clearly feel very important national interest there, and it is not just because it used to belong to us and we have a sort of sentimental longing that what was once ours should still be ours. They have a tremendous concern about Islamic fundamentalism. They have a tremendous concern about drugs. They have a tremendous concern about the admittedly decreasing number of Russians living in Tajikistan, and because Tajikistan shares a border with Afghanistan and the Afghan involvement is something that is very much a part of contemporary Russian thinking, they are worried about that.

DO WE WANT RUSSIA TO REASSERT ITS POWER IN TAJIKISTAN?

Do we want Russia to reassert its power in Tajikistan? No, of course we don't; nor do I think that is likely to happen.

Do we accept that Russia has important major national interests in Tajikistan, including in connection with national security and particularly borders and things that come across it? Yes, I think we do recognize that, and our long term goal obviously is the difficult one of convincing Russia that less can be more, that allowing countries to fly entirely on their own is a more sensible long term investment than trying to keep them under some kind of control, and trying to convince the Tajiks whoever wins the election that they must no longer look uniquely to Moscow, that they must look to themselves, that independence brings with it obligations, as well as privileges.

It is going to be a long haul. I don't think that Russia is sitting there planning ways to make Tajikistan a part of the Soviet Union again.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much.

REFUGEE SITUATION

Mr. Presel, the first question I have is about the issue of displaced persons. My understanding is it is somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 percent of the population of the country fled their homes in terror and are displaced in one way or another inside or outside the borders of the country.

What is the present status of the approximately half-million people who fled their homes? Where are they today? What are their living conditions? What is being done for them?

Mr. PRESEL. I would be entirely happy to tell you what I know, which is not a great deal, and I expect some of the other witnesses will probably be able to tell you in much greater detail. I have been

to Tajikistan twice in the last year. It was almost 20 years before that I had previously been there.

There are an awful lot of refugees. There are an awful lot of refugees who are living under very unpleasant circumstances in Dushanbe, in the other cities. If I suggest that what sociologists refer to as a more traditional form of society, I don't accept that, but what sociologists call a more traditional form of society makes it more likely that families and clans will help. That is probably true, but doesn't go very far to providing more than basic food.

We are a long way from seeing the refugees back where they belong. We are a long way from providing the kinds of—they, the Tajik Government, the authorities, everyone is a long way from providing the kinds of security and political and economic and sanitary conditions which would enable this to happen, and as you yourself said in your opening statement, the fact that this wheel has not been squeaking means it is not getting greased.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Mr. ANDREWS. My information is that as of June 30 through USAID we had spent \$8.5 million in Tajikistan. What has this been spent on?

Mr. PRESEL. That has been spent on humanitarian relief of various kinds. And if you want, I can get or I will submit later a breakdown of it.

Mr. ANDREWS. Yes, please.

[The information referred to was subsequently supplied for the hearing record and follows:]

According to the April-June 1994 Quarterly Report prepared by the office of the Ambassador Simons, Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to the NIS, \$8.5 million has been allocated and disbursed to Tajikistan. The majority of that aid has been humanitarian (\$8 million). The remaining \$500,000 was divided between health care (\$200,000) and NIS exchanges and training (\$300,000). The \$200,000 in health funds were used for immunizations and training of health care workers. The \$300,000 in NIS exchanges and training funds were used to give Tajiks training in economic restructuring and privatization.

EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OBLIGATIONS AND EXPENDITURES FOR TAJIKISTAN THRU JUNE 30, 1994 (000's)

Contractor/grantee	Start date	Total oblig.	Accrued expend.
U.S. Participation in Multilateral Humanitarian Responses			
Aga Khan Foundation of the USA	Apr. 1, 1993	\$1,025	\$1,025
American Red Cross	July 1, 1993	175	175
International Committee of the Red Cross	May 1, 1993	684	684
International Organization for Migration	Feb. 1, 1993	443	318
United Nations Childrens Fund	Sept. 1, 1993	500	500
United Nations Commission for Refugees	May 1, 1993	2,255	1,755
World Food Program	Dec. 8, 1993	2,100	1,100
Subtotal		7,182	5,557
Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Supplies			
CARE	May 1, 1994	3,054	55
Defense Personnel Support Center	June 1, 1993	509	509
Igloo Corporation	July 1, 1992	11	11
People to People Health Foundation	July 1, 1992	147	147
Thermos Company	July 1, 1992	32	32

EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OBLIGATIONS AND EXPENDITURES FOR TAJIKISTAN
THRU JUNE 30, 1994—Continued
(000's)

Contractor/grantee	Start date	Total oblig.	Accrued expend.
UNICEF	July 1, 1992	237	222
Subtotal		3,990	976
Vulnerable Group Feeding			
USDA Commodity Credit Corporation	Mar. 1, 1994	5,100	1,250
Subtotal		5,100	1,250
Institutional Support			
IAA with Department of State	Aug. 1, 1993	19	19
Consultants Travel/Salaries	various	32	26
World Learning/Aga Khan Foundation	June 1, 1992	540	168
Subtotal		591	213
Grand total		\$16,863	\$7,996

Mr. PRESEL. I will be glad to do that. The American Government has spent in all something on the order of \$70 million on Tajikistan in the last few years. Most of that is USDA surplus food, which is a useful sort of assistance to give under these circumstances. The money to which you refer, sir, has almost entirely gone for various kinds of humanitarian assistance, and I will get you the breakdown for it.

Mr. ANDREWS. The breakdown that I have is from your State Department quarterly report for April-June of 1994. It indicates that we have obligated \$17.7 million through USAID and spent \$8.5 million of that. We have obligated \$61.2 million through the Department of Agriculture and spent \$50.1 million, which I assume is the food, in-kind food; we have obligated \$20.8 million of humanitarian shipments and spent all of it.

The categorization "humanitarian shipments," what is that? Is that medicine?

Mr. PRESEL. It is everything. It is food; it is medicine; it is shelter.

Mr. ANDREWS. How is it distributed? If medicine or food or clothing is sent to Tajikistan, who receives it? Who distributes it? And what method is in place for the State Department to know the answers to those questions?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, let me start from the back and work up.

The mechanism for us to know what is going on primarily is the embassy which is there, and the reports which all people that have anything to do with the American bureaucracy find themselves obliged to file. The assistance program to Tajikistan, because it is relatively small and relatively simple, is not one in which we are terribly worried about misapplication of funds. Most of the money that has been spent, most of the assistance that has been provided, all of it, in fact, goes through American NGO's or international organizations. There is no aid mission, there is no American aid mission in Tajikistan.

Mr. ANDREWS. Which NGO's and international organizations are active in the country?

Mr. PRESEL. That is something which I cannot answer because I don't know.

Mr. ANDREWS. OK, if you would supplement the record by giving us that information. I think some of the other witnesses may be able to help us with that.

Mr. PRESEL. I will get you a list.

[The information referred to was subsequently supplied for the hearing record and follows:]

The following is a list of NGO's and international organizations currently either distributing USAID and USDA supplies or utilizing USAID funds in Tajikistan:

Project Hope is utilizing funds provided by USAID and transport provided by S/NIS/C. They have arranged for the delivery and distribution of several flights of donated medical supplies.

CARE has recently established a program for the distribution of medicines and medical supplies funded by USAID for 1994. They are finalizing an agreement with USAID for the distribution of food to mothers and infants. They also have pending a request to USDA for food to be distributed among the refugees.

Aga Kahn Foundation, USA had been working in the Pamirs region for the last several years utilizing funds provided by USAID for emergency relief as well as for development of a local partner. They received funds from S/NIS/C to assist in transport of equipment to an hydroelectric plant. USDA provided food commodities which the foundation distributed during 1993 and is planning to give them additional commodities for 1994.

Mercy Corp. was recently approved by the USDA to distribute commodities during 1994 to refugees and internally displaced persons.

Save the Children has been approved by USDA to distribute commodities during 1994 to targeted displaced populations.

DEVELOPMENT/HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS WORKING IN TAJIKISTAN THRU SEPTEMBER 30, 1994

PVOs/NGOs

Aga Khan Foundation; American Red Cross; CARE USA; Interaction; International Rescue Committee; People to People Health Foundation; Relief International; and Save the Children Foundation.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

International Committee of the Red Cross; International Organization for Migration; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs; United Nations High Commission for Refugees; and World Food Program.

OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Centers for Disease Control; Defense Personnel Support; and USDA Commodity Credit Corporation.

PROVISIONS FOR FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS

Mr. ANDREWS. My next questions are about the elections that are forthcoming. What kind of provisions are being made for refugees to participate in the election process? If someone is homeless, has no permanent address, how are they going to participate and vote?

Mr. PRESEL. The participation will almost certainly be below what would have been the case had they all been there. I confess I haven't thought about it at all, but my guess is that the settlements, the refugee encampments, the villages and cities in which they are living, operate in a way such that everyone knows everyone else, and I don't think it likely that the fact that one was a refugee would automatically disqualify one from voting.

Mr. ANDREWS. But are there any formal procedures that have yet been put in place for registration for voting?

Mr. PRESEL. I don't believe that there are any terribly elaborate procedures worked out for registration. There is certainly nothing of the kind that we would find normal in this country.

Mr. ANDREWS. I want to ask about the election. You say it is November 5?

Mr. PRESEL. November 5 currently scheduled.

Mr. ANDREWS. My understanding was November 6.

Mr. PRESEL. I beg your pardon, it could be.

Mr. ANDREWS. But that is immaterial, the 5th or the 6th.

Can you describe for me the nomination process by which a candidate gets on the ballot? I have read concerns that the nomination process is very involved, very difficult, and may well give us the appearance of an open election but not the reality of an open election. Tell me about the nomination process and how it works.

Mr. PRESEL. Well, I expect, sir, that you and I have read the same reports because I would have to tell you that there is indeed that danger. By restricting the organizations which may themselves nominate and by increasing the number of hurdles over which potential candidates have to jump, you certainly have an effect on the outcome of the election.

It is for that reason that we were concerned at the quite likely prospect of a reasonable percentage, quite a high percentage of the Tajik politically aware population deciding to boycott any election which we think would have made a mockery of an election, and were quite pleased that it seemed likely that there would be at least two candidates and possibly additional candidates able to pass the hurdles for the election. Two candidates as I understand it, would allow a genuine choice, and would almost certainly ensure the participation of the overwhelming majority of the Tajik population who is eligible to vote.

Mr. ANDREWS. It is my understanding, correct me if I am wrong, that to get on the ballot there are certain bodies, regional bodies have the right to nominate. Is it correct that those regional bodies are controlled essentially by elements of the political status quo in any given region so that if I am the most potent political force in a region, I control the regional body that has the right to nominate people? Is that essentially accurate?

Mr. PRESEL. I would have a lot of trouble arguing the contrary.

Mr. ANDREWS. OK. It is further my understanding that the nominating petition has to be signed by 5 percent of the electorate, which is about 133,000 people. That seems to me to be a massive and difficult task in a country that is as loaded with problems as this one is. I won't ask you your opinion as to whether that is sufficient or insufficient, but have I correctly stated the facts?

Mr. PRESEL. Yes.

ELECTION MONITORING

Mr. ANDREWS. What plans does the State have to become involved in the monitoring of this election? What specifically are we going to do?

Mr. PRESEL. We have a group of people, I believe there are four, currently in Tajikistan assessing the arrangements that are being planned and that are beginning, we hope, to be implemented for the elections. We have not as yet made a decision about sending

election monitors. We assume that the NGO's concerned will want to send monitors for the elections, and I believe that there is a quite serious intention on the part of the CSCE, of which Tajikistan is a member, to have CSCE monitors for the elections.

Mr. ANDREWS. For what reason would we not send monitors from the State Department? Is there an argument against doing it?

Mr. PRESEL. I am sure that there is several arguments against doing it. One of them is the participation of official Americans and what happens and so forth, but I see no reason why—first of all, I don't believe a decision has been taken, but in any case, I am not concerned given the activity of American NGO's and thanks to Congressman Hastings, Members of Congress, that there will be no concern of mine at all, that there will be adequate monitoring for an election which is not in any case going to be exactly like ours.

Mr. ANDREWS. Let me just convey not on behalf of the committee but a personal preference that I would strongly prefer the State Department send monitors and become involved in this. This is not something the committee can take a position on without formal action, but my personal preference is that we should do so.

Mr. HASTINGS. I would like to associate myself with that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PRESEL. Congressman, I thank you for those observations, and I will see to it that I report.

[The information referred to was subsequently supplied for the hearing record and follows:]

Prior to the November elections the International Foundation for Electoral Systems sent a five member team to Tajikistan to analyze the status of the Government of Tajikistan's electoral preparation. The team's funding came from the Agency for International Development.

U.S. ASSISTANCE AND THE ELECTIONS

Mr. ANDREWS. The final question is this: I know we don't like to engage in the hypothetical, but I think there is some value here in doing that. It is my understanding that U.S. aid, as you said a few minutes ago, has aggregated in outlays thus far about \$79 million, and it authorizes even more than that, which is a significant amount of money given the size of the country we are talking about.

If we were to assume that reports about this election fall short of even what we would consider to be a minimum standard of fairness, true competition, true access to the ballot, secret ballot, some semblance of free communication of information—if monitors were to assemble a body of evidence that were to lead us to the conclusion that this was not truly a free election or legitimate election by any basic bedrock standards—what policy options are available to the United States to deal with our disappointment with such a situation? I am not asking you to recommend one of them, I am not asking you even to give us an exhaustive list of those options, but what options might we consider right now?

Mr. PRESEL. The temptation, Congressman, to open Pandora's box.

Mr. ANDREWS. Well, perhaps those who are conducting these elections need to see the box opened.

Mr. PRESEL. It would be necessary in the first instance for us to conclude that, as you have said, the elections fall manifestly short of a very low, fairly low hurdle. Without going into an exhaustive set of options, we can pick up our marbles and go home.

Mr. ANDREWS. What does that mean?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, ultimately, we could close the embassy and leave.

Mr. ANDREWS. OK.

Mr. PRESEL. We can, on the contrary, say that because we are so disappointed with what has happened that we will need to substantially increase our investment, financial, political, and in terms of personnel in Tajikistan, and there is everything in between.

Mr. ANDREWS. I think you meant to say because we are so pleased with what has happened?

Mr. PRESEL. So displeased.

Mr. ANDREWS. If we were displeased, we would increase?

Mr. PRESEL. You increase your investment in an attempt to make sure these people understand what it is they need do and why and how. That is sort of the two ends of the spectrum.

Mr. ANDREWS. I understand. I just want to reiterate that for the record, that the ends of the spectrum would be an increase in our involvement, aid, and participation because we concluded that more remedial action was necessary, or a termination of that involvement because we have concluded that the elections fell far short. Again, I want to emphasize for the record that my question to you was if the elections fell short, what options would we consider, not what options would you or the administration recommend—I want to be clear that that was my question.

I thank you very much for your answers.

We are very honored to be joined by the ranking member of our full committee who has been one of the leading voices over many, many years for human rights and for causes of due process and democracy. It is not at all surprising that he is here today because his imprint has been felt on policy areas here for many, many years. We are honored to have Congressman Gilman with us. I would ask him if he would like to make an opening statement before he questions Mr. Presel.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

STATEMENT OF MR. GILMAN

I want to welcome Mr. Presel before the committee and as well as the other distinguished panelists who will be following Mr. Presel. I want to take a moment to say that I appreciate the opportunity that you have arranged for all of us to take a good hard look at the Newly Independent State of Tajikistan.

With the many important issues that we have before us these days, including our mission in Haiti and the crisis in the Balkans, the prospect of nuclear arms in North Korea and many, many more, regrettably it is all too easy to overlook the conflict that has been going on in Tajikistan, and the effect it could have on all of Central Asia.

It is important that this committee, with your leadership, Mr. Chairman, has found the time to review the situation in this little-noticed nation. As I understand it, the civil war that broke out in

Tajikistan in 1992 has likely been the most brutal of all conflicts that have arisen since the Soviet Union fell apart.

We have been informed that tens of thousands of people have died there, and for those reasons alone we need to get a more accurate description of where this conflict is heading, whether the U.N.-sponsored peace talks might succeed, and what future developments in Tajikistan mean to the countries surrounding it.

So I want to thank you and our witnesses for taking the time to join us.

Mr. Presel, I want to join the chairman and Mr. Hastings in noting that we need to ensure that the electoral observers for the November Tajikistan elections, as well as paying very close attention to preelection procedures such as access for the media, are going to be preserved, and I wasn't really persuaded that the State Department has really put as much attention into these kind of things in the recent Presidential elections in Belarus, for example, as it should have, so let's not overlook the importance of these kinds of procedures in places like Tajikistan and Belarus. We hope that you will convey that message for us.

RUSSIAN CONTROL OF TAJIK ASSETS

Let me, Mr. Chairman, with your cooperation, allow me to ask just a few questions. Is it true, Mr. Presel, that the Russian Government is demanding that the Tajik Government turn over to it control of certain of its assets, such as the aluminum plant at Tursunzade as more or less collateral for its financial credits in support of the Tajik budget?

Can you tell us something about that?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, I can tell you, sir, the answer to the specific question. I cannot tell you that because I don't know.

What I can tell you is that the Russian Government seems to have a somewhat ambiguous approach to the control that it either is being asked to or is being obliged to or is trying to avoid assuming over the Tajik economy. I don't think there is a consensus in Moscow as to how involved Russia should get in what is left of a fairly primitive economy.

Whatever the pluses are for Russia in taking control of the economy, whatever that means in an economy like that of Tajikistan, there are some fairly obvious minuses as well. I cannot tell you, but I will be happy to try to find out and will submit it for the record whether or not the Russians have formally asked for the aluminum smelter assets to be turned over to it.

Mr. GILMAN. You might note that in May of 1994, May 12, the Christian Science Monitor had a description of the Tajik factory which smelts Russian ore with Russian rubles, and I would welcome if you could provide us with some information. Observers say that Moscow is demanding control over the few valuable assets here, the aluminum plant, electricity plant, I am quoting from this article, cotton production as collateral. If the credits are not repaid, they will take control, including management, including taking the credits, taking the profits of certain industries here, the diplomat who gave that information was reported as saying. So we would welcome information on that.

[The information referred to was subsequently supplied for the hearing record and follows:]

We understand that Russia has sought control over some of the productive assets of the Tajikistan economy as partial repayment for Russian economic credits to Tajikistan and, perhaps, as a condition of Tajikistan's full inclusion into the Russian ruble zone. While Tajikistan had received several substantial loans of ruble banknotes from Russia and continues to use the Russian ruble as its currency, to the best of our knowledge, it has not yet ceded control of its economic assets to Russia.

RUSSIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Mr. GILMAN. Do you see the Russian sphere of influence that we are hearing more and more about these days reaching out to Tajikistan?

Mr. PRESEL. I feel a great ambiguity on the part of Russians as to what the nature of their relationship should be with the other countries of the CIS taken as a whole, and with any of the individual ones seen separately. I don't think there is any single answer. I am fairly——

Mr. GILMAN. Excuse me for interrupting. Is the Russian military still there?

Mr. PRESEL. There is a Russian division in Tajikistan. There is in addition a collective security force made up of Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz troops, and there are Russian border guards. I don't think it fair to say that these are there contrary to the wishes of the Tajik Government.

I think in fact there is probably a difference of opinion in Moscow as to the desirability of maintaining one or other of those forces. I am fairly clear in my mind, sir, that there is no conscious attempt to somehow recreate the Russian empire, starting in Tajikistan. I think rather it is a question of on both sides which of this tremendously thick issue of ties that has developed since Tajikistan, what is now Tajikistan, became part of the Russian empire, which of the ties one needs to keep and develop, and which should over time be shucked off.

I think it fair to say that with the exception of the problem of the border, Russia sees fewer interests in Tajikistan than it does in some of the other countries of what a number of people still refer to as the "near abroad."

SOVIET REINTEGRATION

Mr. GILMAN. I don't know if you read today's article in the *Washington Post* by Fred Hiatt where the headline is "Russia's Spy Chief Warns West: Don't Oppose Soviet Reintegration," where Mr. Primakov is stating that negative attitudes in the West toward integration are dangerous and should be reconsidered.

He said they stem from an unwillingness to see Russia strengthened as a great state. Apparently there is more and more concern that we see a wider sphere of influence by Russia as they try to maintain their influence and their strength in all of the former Republics. How do you feel about all of that?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, I feel, sir, that the jury is still out on the extent to which Russia is attempting to recreate its former empire. I think, I am quite clear in my mind that Russia's degree of interest in a given country varies with its economic potential, but also

with the number of Russians, number of ethnic Russians living in that particular country, and with the geography of that country. Azerbaijan, which is a country with a large amount of oil, is going to be of greater interest to Russia than Moldova. Kazakhstan, a country which is roughly 40 percent ethnically Russian, is going to be of greater interest to Russia than Tajikistan where the Russian population is much smaller.

I think what we are seeing, Congressman, is a reassertion of Russian self-confidence that Russia has gotten over many of the problems which it faced at the time of dissolution and a feeling that it is therefore legitimate for Russia to make clear to everyone that it has legitimate interests in the countries that are now independent and that used to be part of the Soviet Union. Obviously, it is something about which we worry, but I genuinely believe that the jury is still out.

Mr. GILMAN. Well, I think it is something we should be realistic about. I note that Foreign Minister Kozyrev has called for a reintegration, at least at the economic level of the CIS states, and other Russian officials repeated those statements. And here in Tajikistan we see that Russia not only has its military people at work, but has a number of people virtually influencing or controlling the government, and now are demanding some quid pro quo on the economic assistance that they have given to Tajikistan. I think that this is happening in some of the other states, and I hope we take a good hard look at that and see where we are going.

Mr. PRESEL. We certainly do. I think in the case of economic integration you will find an awful lot of Russians, sir, will tell you it is going to be an awful poison chalice if this thing does start coming back together again.

Mr. GILMAN. You take that seriously?

Mr. PRESEL. Yes, we do.

Mr. GILMAN. I am pleased you are.

Just one more question, Mr. Chairman. I know I am exceeding my time.

DRUG TRAFFICKING

What is the status, Mr. Presel, of criminal arms and narcotics smuggling in the region? Given the instability that has been introduced in the conflict, a number of us are very much concerned about the narcotics trade in that part of the world.

Mr. PRESEL. So are we. And so are the Russians. I think it fair to say that narcotics dealings have increased in the wake of the breakup of Soviet Union.

I have no idea at all of narcotics use by Tajiks. I doubt it is very great, but I can tell you the Russians are extremely concerned about narcotics coming across the Tajik border and transshipping themselves through Tajikistan. Their concern is less that they go through Tajikistan and Russia than that they go through Tajikistan and end up in Russia.

I recently saw the commander of the Russian border guards who expressed a great deal of concern about the drug aspect. We have included Tajik officials in training courses for the fight against narcotics. I think it probably fair to say, without wishing in the least to show a lack of respect for the Tajik Government, that our con-

cern and that of Russians and Western Europeans is probably greater than theirs. It is a long, uphill fight. We are conscious of it, we are doing things to the extent our limited resources allow us to do so, and the Russians are very, very worried about it indeed.

Mr. GILMAN. Do we have any DEA agents in Tajikistan?

Mr. PRESEL. I am sure we do not.

Mr. GILMAN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Gilman. We are also very pleased to be joined by Congresswoman Meyers, and I would invite her to make an opening statement if she wishes before she questions Mr. Presel.

Welcome.

Mrs. MEYERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no opening statement. I do have a couple of questions that I would like to ask.

DISARMING OF TAJIK POPULATION

If there is both an end to the fighting and a political settlement, do you expect that the Tajik Government will find it difficult to disarm its popular front military units?

Mr. PRESEL. Yes. There is an awful lot of firearms that get carried in that part of the world under any set of circumstances, and the fact that there has been a civil war means that there is an extraordinarily large amount of weapons floating around. I think whatever outcome, there is going to be tremendous problems in disarming the Tajik population for quite a long time. That is going to turn out to be a major problem, I think.

Mrs. MEYERS. I am sorry that I was late. I had two other meetings, as we all do.

CHANCES OF A CEASE-FIRE AND PEACEFUL ELECTION

Mr. ANDREWS. We have already explained that to everyone.

Mrs. MEYERS. So you may have commented on this already, but in light of what you have just said, how solid is the cease-fire? Do you have a reasonable expectation that the planned election will go on in a peaceful environment?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, the cease-fire is not yet formally in force. If the cease-fire comes into force, then we believe that the way in which it was negotiated is probably a pretty good augury that it will remain in force through election day, which is when it is meant to stop.

Does that mean that nobody is going to be shooting in Tajikistan between now and then? No. But we think if the cease-fire goes into force, that it will probably hold by and large.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Mrs. MEYERS. As I understand it, Tajikistan is having not only an election but a referendum on a constitution. And how democratic is this proposed new constitution, and does it provide really for a free market economy?

Mr. PRESEL. Well, I don't think anyone in either the executive or the legislative branch would argue that the constitution being submitted is going to be the last great example of Westminster-style

democracy. I don't think it is and I don't think anyone can argue that it would be. It certainly is more authoritarian than ours.

The question of the extent to which the economy is going to be a free market one is I think less likely to be a function of the constitutional arrangements themselves than of developments in the economy themselves and of the extent to which whatever government emerges after the elections and after the parliamentary elections, which I believe it is hoped will take place in February, will throw up by way of governing body.

It has been a long time since I did comparative constitutions. I would have a great deal of difficulty in arguing that this is going to be a shining example, but it does represent a step forward from the anarchy that has by and large existed since Tajikistan assumed its independence, and it certainly is important that the Tajiks be confronted with working under, working within the framework of a constitution.

Mrs. MEYERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Presel, we very much appreciate your time this morning, and just as a reminder, I would like the back-up on the financial questions that I had asked and please convey to the Secretary at least my concern, as seconded by Mr. Hastings, that we strongly consider State Department participation and monitoring of the election process. Certainly the committee has an interest in hearing from the Department, whether in the context of a formal hearing or not, subsequent to those elections what your observations are so that we can follow up.

We thank you very much for your time.

Before I call the second panel, I do want to note for the record that an invitation was extended and originally accepted by the Ambassador from the mission of Tajikistan to the United Nations, his excellency Lakim Kayumov. It was our expectation he would be here to testify. It is my understanding that yesterday the invitation was declined. I don't know if we have a written statement submitted from his excellency, but let me note for the record that if one is submitted, it will be included in the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kayumov appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. At this time we will call as our second panel Mr. Davlat Khudonazarov, who is a former Presidential candidate in 1991, and a Fellow of the United States Institute for Peace; Mr. Anthony Richter, who is Special Advisor to the President of the Soros Foundation; Dr. Barnett Rubin, a Professor at Columbia University, and Director of the Center for The Study of Central Asia and Acting Director of the Center for Preventive Diplomacy, Council on Foreign Relations; and finally Ms. Holly Burkhalter, who is the Washington Director of Human Rights Watch.

I would ask if these individuals could come forward.

Mr. ANDREWS. We thank you for your time this morning. We do have written statements and they will be entered as a part of the record. You are invited to summarize or speak extemporaneously as you wish and I will begin with Mr. Davlat Khudonazarov. Welcome, and the committee looks forward to your testimony.

Mr. UNDELAND. I think I am going to be translating here.

Mr. ANDREWS. Very well. And your name, sir, is?

Mr. UNDELAND. Charles Undeland. I work at the National Endowment for Democracy, a program officer.

Mr. ANDREWS. Very well.

STATEMENT OF DAVLAT KHUDONAZAROV, FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1991, AND FELLOW OF THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE FOR PEACE

[Witness testifying through an interpreter.]

Mr. KHUDONAZAROV. Esteemed chairman, ladies and gentlemen, please accept my gratitude for giving me the opportunity to speak within the walls of Congress. I am grateful for the interest which you have in Tajikistan and in the long-suffering Tajik people.

The Tajiks are the most ancient Indo-European nation and the only Farsi-speaking people of Central Asia. Over the course of our entire history we have enriched the culture of human kind. But it is a tragedy now that Tajikistan is not famous for its poets and prophets, but for its horrible civil war.

This war has taken the lives of nearly 100,000 people. Even according to official statistics, over 900,000 people have become refugees scattered around the world, including myself and my family; we were forced to leave our homeland. I am not a professional politician. I spent my life working in the film-making industry, making films about my people and our culture.

During the Gorbachev period, I, like many other intellectuals following the example of the great Andrei Sakharov, wanted to make efforts to change the life of our people. I was elected to the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, despite the fierce pressure from the party authorities.

In the first contested elections, I received over 90 percent of the votes in Gorno-Badakhshon. Later in the first Presidential elections in Tajikistan, I was the main opposition candidate.

Back in 1991 we proposed to our electorate, radical economic and political reforms. We wanted to change the very nature of power. Above all, we wanted to free the ordinary person from the violence of the totalitarian authorities system, to return land to him and by that to free him from the dependency on state and collective farms.

But the old nomenclature, that is the party nomenclature, did not want to part with power. Unfortunately, this was the main reason for the civil war that has ensued.

The results of the elections were falsified. From the beginning of the democratic process, it had been deformed.

At political meetings I would talk about America and about American values, about the values of American democracy. It was my hope that these ideas would become a symbol of truth for my people, truth and justice for my people. Unfortunately, we received no help from the outside. In fact, American newspapers reported about me as the candidate of the fundamentalists. At the same time, we were agitating for the freedom of confession. This is taking into account that over 70 years neither Muslims, Jews nor Christians had freedom of conscience.

In Tajikistan there are only Sunis and Ismailis; no Shiia. I just want to mention this. I raise this issue just to stress how important it is to understand all that is happening in the world around you.

Without taking up too much of your time, after such a huge bloodletting, the only path is through peace. From the very beginning of the civil war, I halted all political activities and engaged only in peace-making activities. I tried to bring together the two sides so that they would come to trust each other. And there is only one way, the way of compromise.

The most exact implementation of agreements that have been reached—and this is clearly very difficult and slow-moving process because behind everyone's backs there is a sea of blood that has been shed, and therefore I have a great request to you, that is to help by all means the peacemaking.

Much has been said here today and in your questions about the elections. My viewpoint, based on the experience that I have had before, is that these elections will yield nothing positive because tens of thousands of people have weapons in their hands. Groups of bandits are not subordinate to anyone, and it is clear that the constitution is not going to be implemented since you have a situation where at the same time there is a referendum on the constitution there are also elections according to that constitution.

This indicates that either the current leaders of Tajikistan are themselves lost or confused or it shows that they, and the people that stand behind them, are simply trying to confuse world opinion, playing political games and trying to show that a democratic process is taking place. Unfortunately, this game will only further exacerbate the problems in Tajikistan. The situation in Tajikistan is very complex. There are many places surrounding Tajikistan that can explode at any time, because these borders are very artificial. Stalinist politics created these artificial borders.

And while in neighboring Republics there is a certain amount of totalitarianism, the problems in Tajikistan can broaden and the situation can explode at any time. I should also mention the surrounding area of Hsingan, a province of China, Punjab, Kashmir, as well as the complete degradation of Afghanistan as other regional factors.

The situation is such that the local anarchy can become comprehensive anarchy or anarchy for the entire area. Today, people with a medieval consciousness have in their hands weapons of mass destruction. This may lead to a situation where civilization cannot save itself from this disaster occurring at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the third millennium.

Thank you. I do not want to take any more of your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Khudonazarov appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very, very much.

Before we go to Mr. Rubin, I want you to know that Congressman Rohrabacher has joined us this morning as well. If he would like to make an opening statement at this time, we would be happy to insert it in the record.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Just very briefly.

OPENING STATEMENT OF MR. ROHRABACHER

I think that very few Americans understand anything about this part of the world. If 1 percent of the American population was knowledgeable about events in this region of Asia, I would be sur-

prised, and I would be surprised if 5 percent of the Members of Congress knew anything about this part of the world.

I predict that unless the United States starts paying attention to this part of the world, to Afghanistan and this Central Asian part of the former Soviet Union, the problems emanating from this region will wash over not just into Pakistan and into surrounding countries but also to every Western democracy.

During the Afghan war, I was one of the few Members of Congress who were with the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. I worked in the White House during the Reagan years and immediately thereafter; and after I left the White House, I went to Afghanistan and spent considerable time with the Mujahedeen. My former friends are now going through an incredible travail due to the hundreds of millions, if not billions of dollars, of drug money that gives enormous power and influence to bands of very malicious individuals.

What is going on in Afghanistan coupled with the chaos that is going on in Tajikistan threatens the stability of the entire world. We will pay for it if we do not pay attention to it, so I am very happy to be here today and be part of this.

Thank you very much.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you.

Dr. Rubin, we appreciate your distinguished work and we invite you to testify next.

STATEMENT OF DR. BARNETT RUBIN, PROFESSOR, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF CENTRAL ASIA, AND ACTING DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. RUBIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you and the members both for holding this hearing and for your work for over a year now placing the plight of Tajikistan on the congressional agenda.

As you said, the materials we submitted will be added to the record. Thank you.

Tajikistan was the poorest Soviet Republic and the Republic most dependent on Moscow. It became nominally independent without a clear national identity, a viable economy, or national security forces. It shares a long border and ethnic ties with Afghanistan. It is, therefore, not surprising, Mr. Chairman, that soon after becoming independent, Tajikistan collapsed into civil war.

Charges that the conflict results from extremist ideologies, whether communism or Islamic fundamentalism, should be evaluated in light of Tajikistan's vacuum of institutions and plethora of weapons. These conditions virtually guarantee that disputes would escalate into warfare.

U.S. policy should promote international guarantees of an interim period of dialogue during which the people of Tajikistan can build basic political, social and economic institutions. This means supporting the sovereignty of Tajikistan, while recognizing that national sovereignty today includes both democratic decentralization of power and participation in institutions of international cooperation.

This policy should have four elements. One, our multilateral policy should support the efforts of the U.N. and the CSCE to find a

negotiated solution to the civil war and to safeguard human rights. The United States should fully support the U.N.-sponsored negotiations. We should support and fund the humanitarian work of U.N. agencies, and in particular UNHCR, which is doing an outstanding job of refugee repatriation and protection under demanding conditions. We should stand behind the strong and by and large negative judgments of the government's unilateral political reforms which have been issued by the CSCE.

Two, our bilateral policy toward Russia should urge Moscow to use its preponderance in the region to promote peaceful resolution of the conflict, the sovereignty of the new states, democracy, and genuine international cooperation. We should recognize that during the interim period, military forces of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States can play a positive role if they guarantee the security of a negotiated settlement and political liberalization.

If the parties to the conflict agree on such a role for these forces, the United States should support U.N. or CSCE monitoring of them, as is apparently called for in the agreement reached in Tehran last week. Indeed, recognition of a limited role for Russian military forces in return for the protection of opposition political participation appears to be the bargain at the heart of the U.N.-sponsored negotiations.

Three, our bilateral policy toward Tajikistan should encourage a negotiated settlement and democratization. We should continue to provide unconditional aid for humanitarian needs and the construction of civil society. Aid for economic development, however, should depend on greater protection of legality and human rights, very important in light of the discussion about the elections.

Democratic reforms must develop out of negotiation and consultation. We should reject or at least strongly criticize the government's unilateral efforts to preempt the negotiations through promulgation of a constitution and elections.

I might add, without elaborating on it here, that in evaluating this constitution and the elections, it is important not only to look at the content of the documents, but at the context in which they were introduced. If we send observers to the upcoming elections—and I would prefer that they be called observers rather than monitors for reasons I can explain in answer to questions if you wish—we should inform the government in advance that we cannot regard these elections as free and fair as long as the ban remains on the opposition parties and movements, and the latter do not have free access to the media. It is not necessary to send monitors to Tajikistan in order to ascertain these facts. We should not provide technical assistance to any such inherently unfair elections. Democracy is much more than elections, and the heart of our support for democratization should be support for legality and civil society.

Four, and finally, we should integrate our policy on Tajikistan into a framework for regional security in Central and Southwest Asia in which a top priority must be a quest for the stabilization of Afghanistan. Mikhail Gorbachev called Afghanistan a bleeding wound, and we all know that an untreated wound becomes infected and spreads.

The United States bears a special responsibility, as our poorly monitored and indiscriminate arms transfers to the most extremist groups exacerbated a disaster caused by Soviet aggression. We need to bring to bear our full diplomatic and intelligence capabilities to support the United Nations' efforts to resolve the civil war and cutoff the external sources of support to the warlords.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rubin appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much, Dr. Rubin.

As you may have heard, the bell rang, which means we have to cast a vote. What I propose we do, we will briefly adjourn the hearing while the members go cast their votes.

We will be back within 15 minutes and we will resume, Mr. Richter, with your testimony. We are temporarily adjourned.

[Recess.]

Mr. ANDREWS. Ladies and gentlemen, if we could resume the hearing. Sorry for the delay. Sometimes the business of the Nation goes on despite us. This is one of those instances.

We appreciate your patience and we are going to proceed with Mr. Anthony Richter, who is Senior Advisor to the President of the Soros Foundation, a group of people who have acted while others have thought and talked. We appreciate the good work that your foundation has done, Mr. Richter, and look forward to your thoughts this morning.

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY H. RICHTER, SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT, SOROS FOUNDATION

Mr. RICHTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would first of all like to commend you for the attention that you have brought to the serious developments in this region. Previously I thought that Tajikistan was a forgotten conflict, but looking around the room today and seeing the number of members that have turned out for these hearings, I am very impressed that that is no longer the case.

I would like to thank you for inviting me on behalf of the Soros Foundations, which is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, to testify before the committee today. I would like to briefly summarize my written statement and submit the written statement to be duly entered into the record.

Mr. ANDREWS. Which it will be.

Mr. RICHTER. Thank you. I was going to try to read my entire testimony, but on the other hand if I were to limit it to only new information left over after Dr. Rubin's presentation, I would probably just end it right now. The statements here on behalf of the foundation arise from a profound concern over the security, humanitarian and human rights issues raised by the conflict in Tajikistan.

The concern of the Soros Foundations has been expressed not only in words but in deeds, as well. Over the past year the Soros Foundations have spent nearly \$1 million in Tajikistan to jump start the process of reconstruction and development, to monitor human rights abuses, to alleviate the suffering of refugees, and to help search for peaceful solutions.

The hearings today are particularly timely for three reasons. First of all, in 5 days time Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrives

in the United States to address the United Nations and to hold a summit with President Clinton. The question of Russian peacekeeping in Tajikistan will certainly arise, since the Russian Government has announced it will submit proposals to the present session of the U.N. General Assembly.

Second, in July, the Government of Tajikistan suddenly announced Presidential elections due to take place later this very week, only to postpone them until November 6. We should, during this critical hiatus, which I think should probably, under better circumstances, have been extended given the massive violence it has provoked, take the opportunity to reflect on the priorities of U.S. policy in the region.

Third, Tajikistan, which has never fully regained its stability after the civil war, erupted in pitched battles which, according to printed reports, involved up to 1,000 rebel troops inside the country near Tavildara. Fortunately this weekend, U.N.-supervised negotiations between government and opposition representatives in Tehran resulted in a cease-fire until the elections.

I would like briefly to move to five reasons why this conflict should present an interest to the American people. I think it is, as has been pointed out, somewhat of a mystery why we haven't heard of it. After all, why should yet another ethnic civil war in a remote land most people never have heard of, unfortunately, be of interest? Why this week when all American eyes are on Haiti should we look at Tajikistan?

The first of these five reasons I think very clearly is that the outcome of the conflict in Tajikistan affects the security of this region and the U.S. relationship with Russia. The United States is interested in forging a solid, cooperative relationship with the Russian Federation and seeing Russia emerge as an open and democratic society that is also a responsible partner within the international community.

Undoubtedly, Russia has a legitimate interest in Tajikistan's stability, as it neighbors volatile Afghanistan. According to many accounts, the presence of Russian troops has largely played a stabilizing role in the conflict. Yet at the same time recently United Nations Ambassador Madeleine Albright has indicated support for formalizing Russia's peacekeeping role within the Commonwealth of Independent States. Before this is given formal approval, I just think the matter deserves some greater understanding.

The second reason is that Central Asia is an area rich in oil and gas and an area in which U.S. companies are investing more and more heavily, notably the famous \$20 billion deal signed by Chevron for oil and gas in Kazakhstan. The energy and investment profits that will come from the region could potentially be jeopardized by a widening conflict.

The third reason, the Tajik civil war threatens to create a second Afghanistan in Central Asia. In fact, it has been pointed out by Dr. Rubin and other noted specialists, the problems are very similar, the four devils of regionalism, a revival of at sometimes negative factors of Islam, a rise in heroin cultivation, and trade and proliferation of weapons.

Fourth reason, Tajikistan affects an entire region that is vital to U.S. security interests. A protracted civil war in Tajikistan means

Central Asia will burn, so said Daniel Pipes, a noted specialist. He pointed out that there are five nuclear powers in the region, Russia, India, China, Kazakhstan and Pakistan. Should the violence widen further, it could elevate tensions among all of these, each of which possess weapons of mass destruction.

Finally, the fifth reason is the inability of the international community to stabilize what seems to be remote, isolated or internal disturbances has become a leading threat to global security. One needs only to recall in this connection the previously, to some, unheard of places of Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and this week when we are thinking of Haiti, the greater reach that these conflicts have has become all the more apparent to us.

I would like to touch on four suggestions concerning U.S. policy with regard to the future of Tajikistan.

First, with reference to the U.N. process, the United States should place a high priority on support for the U.N.-sponsored negotiations process. The United States should also support the cease-fire announced this past weekend between government forces and opposition fighters.

The United States should also recognize the considerable contribution of Russian troops to keeping peace in the region. At the same time, their activities should be brought under a U.N. mandate and held to the same standards and norms throughout the world that apply to U.N. peacekeeping operations.

Second, this relates to the CSCE process. The announcement of Presidential elections has played a destabilizing role in Tajikistan, notably by halting the negotiations process and by increasing military activity by the armed opposition. The United States should, through the CSCE and its own direct channels, advocate the postponement of Presidential elections until the successful completion of negotiations between the government and the opposition.

Well-prepared elections would create legitimacy for a new government. Should it, however, not prove possible to secure postponement, the U.S. Government should mobilize support for monitoring the elections by nongovernmental organizations as well as by the CSCE.

Briefly on humanitarian and refugee affairs, it has been a particular interest of the Soros Foundations to deliver humanitarian relief assistance to those Tajik refugees still in northern Afghanistan. Numbering in the tens of thousands, these refugees have suffered the intense hardships of their own civil war and now in exile are subject to the torments of the conflict in Afghanistan. Providing they are willing to come home, the United States should support the excellent efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide for their speedy repatriation to Tajikistan. Their repatriation should be conducted with dignity and respect to the returning refugees and provide for their safety upon their return.

Fourth and last, sir, on democratization and economic development. Obviously it will require years for Tajikistan to recover from the trauma it has suffered and merely promulgating a new constitution or conducting free and fair elections under the present circumstances is not going to do the trick. The United States has con-

tributed significantly to Tajikistan's need for food and more recently for reconstruction and development.

The U.S. assistance has been tremendously effective. This assistance should be maintained. If there is improvement in Tajikistan's human rights performance and progress in other democratic reforms, economic assistance should also be given. To ensure that Tajikistan moves as quickly as possible along the path of democratization, openness and tolerance, the United States should make a priority of those foreign assistance programs which would promote the values and institutions of an open society, regard for human rights, appreciation for a free press, freedom of conscience, association, and religion.

Mr. Chairman, Tajikistan, the very poorest of states to emerge from the Soviet Union, the Republic which has suffered more than any other, has been too neglected until today. Tajikistan needs the support and attention of the United States, and it is in American interests to pay it its due. With your permission—well, I think I am going to stop there. I hope I haven't exceeded my limit.

Thank you, sir. I wait for your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Richter appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Anthony.

Ms. Burkhalter, let me say how much we appreciate the work that you and your organization do. In a sense, we are trying to emulate that work today by sending a message that people around the world are watching. That is the message we want to send today by this hearing, that the Members of the U.S. Congress and the American public are watching. The events that are taking place in this part of the world may be remote geographically, but they are not remote as far as being close to the center of critical issues about the way people are treated by their governments. We appreciate the work you are doing, and we look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HOLLY BURKHALTER, WASHINGTON DIRECTOR, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Ms. BURKHALTER. Thank you so much, Mr. Andrews. Thank you for being here, Mr. Rohrabacher. I have often thought that the significance of a hearing is disproportionate to a country's overall coverage in the U.S. press. In other words, the less that is known about a country or the less resonance it might have, it seems to me, the more a hearing like this can be noticed and can be helpful.

I think the presence of such a large number of witnesses, some from the Government of Tajikistan, is a tribute to the interest that is here and the significance of the issues that are being raised by the members themselves and by my fellow panelists.

I am glad to be here. I am not the organization's Tajikistan expert. I apologize. I cannot have her here because she is in Tajikistan. One of the many contributions to human rights in Tajikistan made by the philanthropist Mr. George Soros was to enable my organization, Human Rights Watch, to open an office in Tajikistan. We have been enormously fortunate in having a fluent Farsi speaker and Russian speaker in the same person in the office, and she has been a wonderful source of information to us

about this country which has such a difficult human rights situation.

I am reflecting—

Mr. ANDREWS. If she would like to supplement the record with written thoughts of hers, she is welcome to do so.

Ms. BURKHALTER. Well, you have them in my written testimony, but the next time she is in town I would love to have you meet her. When she was last here I think you were tied up, but we have been very fortunate because it has enriched our own understanding of Tajikistan immeasurably.

I am just going to speak extemporaneously because my fellow witnesses have, of course, stolen all my thunder.

I did want to use the occasion to comment a little bit on the testimony which came first, Mr. Presel's remarks. I am a little dismayed that he didn't take advantage of the opportunity provided here to go on in more depth about how deeply flawed these elections really are, and I found remarks such as, "Well, these aren't Sweden" or "These elections aren't taking place in the same context as the United States" or "It would be unreasonable to hold the Tajik Government to such standards," I found such remarks to be unhelpful in the extreme. No one is suggesting that Tajikistan is Sweden, but I don't think that the Swedish model is the standard we should be applying.

To suggest that the bad situation has sort of bottomed-out bothers me. I also think remarks such as that the procedures enabling Tajiks living outside of Tajikistan are not terribly elaborate when in fact they don't exist at all minimize what really does represent quite a difficult situation. I do welcome his recognition that the human rights situation in Tajikistan is terrible, and I acknowledge that he did say that.

I would like to say just a word about the elections. Barney and I were talking about this during the break, and I was puzzled by the concept of a choice in elections that are taking place in a thoroughly and completely nondemocratic environment, and he has filled me in on what the nature of that choice is—a limited choice, but nonetheless a choice. Even having said that, however, I think the fact that the elections are taking place in a situation where all major opposition political figures are in jail or have had to flee to escape being in jail, where all the major political parties have been banned, where all the opposition newspapers have been closed, where journalists are not only at risk of prosecution, but they are at risk of being killed.

There has been seven journalists killed in the last couple of years, three this year, four last. When you have ethnic tensions galloping along, largely inspired by such actions as selective disarmament, et cetera, and no provisions whatsoever for refugees to register and make their views known, it represents more than sort of "not the Swedish model," it represents a complete disaster.

Accordingly, Human Rights Watch believes that democratic elections can't take place, cannot take place in this environment and would welcome a postponement until such time as conditions, even nominal conditions exist so that people really are permitted to make a respectable choice and to make their views known and to hear the views of others, which is distinctly not the case now.

In that context, I think that I would advise caution about dispatching U.S. monitors officially to monitor a situation that is deeply flawed. It seems to me that the failures are not so much of what is happening at the ballot boxes but rather what has already happened, the banning of the political parties, the jailing of the opposition political leaders, et cetera.

Accordingly, and I really just made this up on the spot, and I would welcome the advice of my colleagues on the table and over on your side as well if this seems like a bad idea, but if we were going to do any monitoring, it seems like the time to monitor is now, and perhaps there could be a way to goose this along a little bit and support the U.N.-CSCE negotiations by the administration looking into something like a multicountry mission or delegation, particularly including Tajikistan's foreign contributors, the EU in particular. This way there could be some sort of presence to make representation on behalf of the newspaper editors and journalists and television people who happen to be in jail, to express concerns about the absence of protection for free expression of views, et cetera. I would make that recommendation only if it would be considered to be useful by U.N. negotiators who have reached a critical point and have done quite well in this circumstance.

But I think putting people there on election day would be less significant than putting people there now to make representation on some of these restrictions on democracy. With that I will close, but one of the other things I would encourage looking into, though I am no expert myself, is international broadcast VOA or whatever. International radio waves reach Tajikistan, and if they are not broadcasting in the Tajik language a lot, they should be, to give people a sense of what is going on, because they are certainly not going to get it from their own papers. It would be something that the Congress' voice could be heard on, and I think it would be well-received over at VOA.

Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Burkhalter appears in the appendix.]

Mr. ANDREWS. I know Congressman Rohrabacher has another engagement, so we will go to him for his questions.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

IMPORTANCE OF TAJIKISTAN

I would like to emphasize that today we are sending a message to the regime in Tajikistan: they are not doing their dirty deeds without being noticed in the United States of America, they are not closing down their newspapers and suppressing their opposition, they are not engaged in the brutal repression of any potential adversary to their power without being noticed in the United States of America. We do not believe that human rights is simply a Western notion that is meant only for the United States of America or for Western Europeans.

We believe that human rights and democracy is something our forefathers felt was the right of every man, woman and child in the world, and we especially resent any bastardization of the electoral process as a tool to cement tyranny. We will be watching very closely what is going on in terms of the upcoming election to make

sure that it isn't a travesty to democracy, but perhaps hopefully, maybe it can be turned into something better.

And as I said earlier, if the West does not pay attention to this region, not just to Tajikistan but also to Central Asia in general—including Afghanistan—the problems there will affect the well-being of the Western democracies.

ROLE OF THE KGB

I was in Georgia during the transition of the Soviet Union. There, I noticed that the KGB had a major role in turning what was a democratic movement into a nondemocratic state. While the elected leader, Mr. Gamsakhurdia, was depicted in the Western media as a fascist and as a horrible human being, Mr. Shevardnadze, who was remembered by Georgians as being the head of the KGB in Georgia, came back in as a hero making his alliances with the old KGB.

I would like to ask our first witness whether or not the former KGB is playing a major role now in the direction of this country.

Mr. KHUDONAZAROV. The horribly destructive role that the KGB played in the former Soviet Union now under conditions of chaos and anarchy is fulfilled by essentially criminal elements, criminal elements make up the structures of the KGB and the Ministry of the Interior. After December 1992, many criminals who had served prison sentences for several times took the key positions in these structures, the Interior Ministry and the KGB. The former Minister of the Interior, 42-year-old general committed suicide. For him the world had been overturned. Those people that previously he would put in prison took over his position.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Mr. ROHRBACHER. The former KGB in other parts of the former Soviet Union appear to be allied with criminal gangs or Russian Mafia types. Are some of the former secret policemen from the former regime now involved with the current regime? Are you saying that they have allied themselves with criminal elements or are these just new people taking over the intelligence structure?

Mr. KHUDONAZAROV. I think it should be stated sort of as a general answer that in the post-Gorbachev period the nomenclature and the nomenclature within those security agencies are definitely a brake on democracy. However, they do not fulfill their previous functions, do not have exactly the roles that they had previously.

Mr. RUBIN. May I comment? I think that it would be a mistake, while everything that my colleague and friend has said is true, I think it would be a mistake to believe that the cause of these events is intelligence agencies. The phenomenon is more that in Tajikistan, as elsewhere, with the breakdown of the former command economy without the creation of an institutional framework for a different kind of economy, criminal elements are moving into economic activity.

As you know, the fundamental business of government is raising the funds to pay for the services that it provides, and in a situation where economic activity is largely monopolized by criminal elements, elements within the government will ally with them in

order to get the resources they need for the policies they want to do.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Where does political freedom come to play in that scenario?

Mr. RUBIN. Of course, in a society which is not regulated by a system of laws, it is not possible to protect political freedom, although individuals may enjoy it by chance from time to time.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Do those people who are profiteering and trying to grab resources have a motive in repressing the emergence of democracy and political freedom in that part of the world?

Mr. RUBIN. Of course they have a motive in repressing not only democracy and political freedom, but also their rival gangs, so it is important to emphasize that much of the violence in Tajikistan which has a political character is not necessarily politically motivated as we understand it, but is a phenomenon which arises from the lawless situation there and the breakdown of institutions.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Rubin, do you believe that the furthering democratic institutions is the best method in eliminating the power of these criminal gangs, or can they operate within a democratic process?

Mr. RUBIN. Well, of course one can't eliminate crime 100 percent. Fundamentally, the way of eliminating these criminal gangs is, I think, the creation of a law-based market economy, which will provide an alternative way of engaging in economic activity, and that in turn will provide a social basis for the expansion of freedom, just as the creation of greater legality is necessary for the creation of a market economy.

ROLE OF CURRENT REGIME

Mr. ROHRBACHER. And a question for the last two witnesses, the current regime, how would you characterize them? Isn't this just a group of gangsters who have taken over a territory and are thwarting the democratic aspirations of some of the better people of that society?

Mr. RICHTER. Well, I should say that to the best of my information, the best of my knowledge, the present regime came to power as the result of the recent civil war, a civil war whose results persist to this day. They were not—the top leadership seeks to halt Presidential elections and to promulgate a new constitution in order to provide a *de jure* basis for their *de facto* rule. I am not sure whether I would be so bold as to call them criminals, but they are serving as the leaders of a country which they were not elected to rule. That is what I would have to say on it.

Ms. BURKHALTER. I would just leave my testimony where it is, which is to say the human rights record is terrible.

Mr. RUBIN. One comment. The current government in Dushanbe is not an undifferentiated regime. Within that government one can find many good people and one can find many people who are sincerely interested in democratizing their country, just as one can find them on the other side. And on the other side one can also find criminal elements and people who believe in violence. The hope of the future of Tajikistan is creating a dialogue between those people who have the interest of their country at heart who now find themselves on both sides of this terrible civil war.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Dr. Rubin, I would like to thank you very much for that insight. I believe that what you just said is probably closer to reality than some of my more adamant black and white analysis. Let us hope and pray that not only in Tajikistan but also in Afghanistan and all of Central Asia that the United States will play a more positive role by working with the decent and good people on both sides of these conflicts. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ANDREWS. You are very welcome. I want to state once again for the record, because I think it is important that we come back to this point that representatives of the present regime were in fact invited to be here this morning and to state their position and to explain events from their point of view, and they declined to do so. It is awfully important that this Congress practice what it preaches and hear all points of view, and there was an opportunity this morning for all points of view to be heard, which was declined.

HOW CAN TAJIKISTAN BE IMPROVED

I want to ask Mr. Khudonazarov this question. If you went back to your country today and attempted to discuss with your fellow citizens your program for how to improve the country, your ideas as to how to improve your country, are there any means through which you could disseminate that information other than meeting people personally and talking to them?

Mr. KHUDONAZAROV. Under present conditions—rather, in the current situation, there are no conditions for returning. But if we take a hypothetical situation of returning there are no means of spreading information in Dushanbe and in central Tajikistan, not to mention the fact that my house, my apartment, my archaeological collection, my archives were all robbed. Therefore, as soon as I arrived at the airport I would end up in a house sponsored by the government under an armed guard; taken prisoner, in other words.

U.S. POLICY

Mr. ANDREWS. Dr. Rubin, let me ask you a question about your recommendations as to the policy the United States should pursue. First of all, with respect to the multilateral negotiations sponsored by the U.N. and CSCE, do you think it is appropriate that the November 6 elections be postponed while those negotiations continue?

Mr. RUBIN. Yes, both because the formation of a transitional government is one of the subjects of those negotiations, and holding these elections at that time preempts that, and also because the elections are creating and will create violence inside Tajikistan.

Mr. ANDREWS. Two follow-up questions.

CONDITIONS FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

One, what conditions do you think have to obtain before legitimate elections could take place? And what instrumentality or agency could guarantee the existence of those conditions or at least promote the existence of those conditions?

Mr. RUBIN. Holding elections should be part of an agreement on the political settlement reached through the negotiations under the

aegis of the United Nations. The parties can then reach an agreement on appropriate monitoring through the United Nations, the CSCE, NGO's, U.S. Government and so on, but it should not be preempted by one side or the other.

Mr. ANDREWS. You drew a distinction earlier between an observer and a monitor of elections. Could you elaborate on that for us?

Mr. RUBIN. The role of a monitor, as I see it, is not merely to observe what takes place, but also then to issue a finding as to whether the elections are free and fair and what the flaws in the process are. That is, sending monitors presupposes that there is a *prima facie* possibility that these could be free and fair elections. In this case there is no such *prima facie* possibility.

However, despite that fact, it is possible that despite all their drawbacks something which is bad could be turned into something good; that is, it does represent some small opening of the political system. It is possible that sending observers would enable us to make the point about how we think that opening should continue and be more inclusive. It also might help to avert some of the violence which I fear the election is going to provoke, especially at the local level.

FUNCTION OF ELECTION MONITORS

Mr. ANDREWS. I would think that the dispatch of observers would probably serve four functions. It might preclude some of the violence, as you just discussed; it would permit us to have on-site gathering of evidence as to what happened; it would send a positive signal saying that what minimal incremental progress may have taken place should continue. But it would be more significant for what it does not say, that by calling these folks observers and making it clear they are not there in any way to sanction the election, we are acknowledging the absence of the possibility that the elections could be legitimate. I think I would amend my earlier request to the State Department accordingly and I appreciate the schooling on that.

HOW SHOULD AID BE SPENT

Let me ask you this question. Let's assume that Secretary Christopher called you in and said we have obligated \$101 million for Tajikistan, it is available to us. We have spent \$79 million. That leaves us \$32 million we have obligated but not spent. What should we do with it? What advice would you give him?

Mr. RUBIN. Well, I must say in the Soros Humanitarian Fund for Tajikistan in the last year, we have had a hell of a time spending \$1 million, so I am not sure how to productively spend \$32 million in Tajikistan at this time. I don't really have very good ideas on it. I would say, I could in general give the type of programs that I think it should be spent on. Of course, as I said, humanitarian aid, civil society initiatives, and so on. I think it is very difficult at this point to find local partners who are capable of absorbing that amount of money. I would like to see exactly how all that money that was spent was in fact spent.

Mr. ANDREWS. For the record, my data are current only as of the end of the second calendar quarter of 1994, so in fact there may be fewer unexpended dollars than I just said.

ROLE OF SOROS FOUNDATION

I want to jump to Mr. Richter because what has so impressed me about the Soros Foundation is it seems to find answers to questions like the one I just posed. I am very encouraged by the fact that the foundation seems to be about feeding people and building houses rather than issuing reports and having conferences, that things seem to get done where people really need them.

And so let me ask you, in your testimony, Mr. Richter, you talk about our making priorities of dealing with humanitarian refugee affairs and coming up with a strategy for economic development, working conjunctively with democratization. In Tajikistan, what kinds of specific strategies have you identified that work with respect to humanitarian assistance?

How does it work best?

Mr. RICHTER. Well, thank you.

I have to begin with a discussion of the obstacles and the difficulties, and I would, while thanking you for the compliment, Mr. Chairman, about the achievements that we have made, I would say that much more remains to be done, and there are times such as these when words and events mean more than the money which can be spent on delivering humanitarian assistance.

The enormous difficulty which presents itself to us in supporting the development of a civil society is that a civil accord, a negotiations process has not yet been reached. Without promulgating the institutions and instruments of a civil society, it is incredibly difficult. I have worked for the foundation for 7 years, and have never had such great difficulty in spending grant funds. People come back and return money to us and say I am sorry, we just can't spend it.

Mr. ANDREWS. That is unheard of in the Federal Government in the course of domestic affairs. It is truly an historic moment.

Mr. RICHTER. I have also found Tajikistan to be quite a lesson. I would have to point to the kind of work done by such nongovernmental organizations as Human Rights Watch, Helsinki as being essential to the ongoing process because without a greater sense among the people who live in Tajikistan today that their human rights are being monitored, dispassionately, in a nonpartisan fashion, but with professional fervor and distinction that Human Rights Watch, Helsinki is known for, without people being sure that they can speak their minds, associate freely, it will be very difficult to build civil society.

I would like to be able to say that we could support training for journalists, to support independent television, independent radio, and print media, but today even the newspapers that had recently been coming out only come out once a week because of lack of paper, lack of funding. It is a very, very difficult situation, so I think that it is for a like this which brings attention to the need for negotiations and to complete the political process.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Richter, let me ask the question that I asked Dr. Rubin. Let me put you in Secretary Christopher's office and

sharpen the question just a little bit and say—should we spend this money at all, and do future installments of U.S. aid have some use in moving the negotiations toward the kind of structure that Dr. Rubin talked about? Is this a sufficient or adequate incentive to suggest that the parties need to do in these negotiations which Dr. Rubin talked about?

Mr. RICHTER. I would say that the first priorities would have to be in democracy building and in economic development, income generation for returning refugees, reconstruction of their houses so they can begin to piece together a life for themselves and then follow on simultaneously with programs developing a civil society, and it is a very difficult situation.

GDP FOR TAJIKISTAN

Mr. ANDREWS. Measured in U.S. dollars, does anyone know the gross domestic product of Tajikistan? Is that statistic available? You don't have to provide that now. It can be provided later. This is not a quiz. I am just curious. The reason I ask it is, it is easier for me to evaluate the extent to which the question I just asked has relevance if I know the extent to which the aid has a real—Dr. Rubin.

Mr. RUBIN. According to World Bank figures, the GDP per capita of Tajikistan in 1989 was, if I remember correctly, you can check it, it is in the article that I appended, it was about \$1,300, and since that time it must be half that or less at this time to the extent that such things mean anything.

Mr. ANDREWS. So about \$600 times 5 million people, 6 million people is how much? OK. I just wanted to get some sense of the—yes, sir?

Mr. KHUDONAZAROV. Perhaps this is not directly related to your question. While talking about the negotiations process, it is very important to remember helping the tens of thousands of refugees in northern Afghanistan who live in horrible conditions, tens of thousands have died. I spoke with one of the representatives by phone before today's hearing.

Many different kinds of people cannot understand why no international organizations have come to help them. What does this mean, are they not people? When people talk about extremists, I want you to know that extremists are not born, they do not develop by themselves. I personally know these people. They supported a democratic state. But at a moment of difficulty, of not receiving any kind of assistance, can turn anyone's consciousness, change anyone's consciousness. In order to have a positive influence on the negotiations process, it would be very important for the West to help those people.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you. I want to note for the record that Ms. Burkhalter has been called to return to her office for events surrounding Haiti and extends her appreciation. We extend our appreciation to her.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Let me just conclude by saying that the purpose of our hearing today is really threefold, and I want to thank the witnesses for helping us achieve these purposes. The first purpose was to con-

duct education for policymakers in the United States about an area of the world on which we have placed too little priority and about which we know too little, and you have certainly helped me and the other members of the committee learn more so that we can help with our colleagues.

And I think that the comments of Congressman Rohrabacher are right on target when he suggests that the geography may be remote and the country may be small, but the problems are very acute and very near to issues the United States is going to be facing over the next couple of decades. Sometimes when you have an opportunity to change directions in a small context, you can have large results rather than wait for those same problems to manifest themselves in a much more violent way on a much larger scale, so we are hoping that what we learn and what we can do in what is a relatively small context can avoid greater problems for the people of Central Asia and for the people of the United States.

The second purpose has been to think about U.S. policy—financially, diplomatically, eventually perhaps militarily toward this part of the world, so that we can get a better understanding of the parameters in which we are operating, and each of the witnesses has been most helpful in achieving that for us.

Finally, I do want to reiterate something we have heard from many of the witnesses, and Congressman Rohrabacher said it well: "to the regime that is going to be conducting this election and is participating in these negotiations, the U.S. Congress is watching." We are aware of the issues here, we have not prejudged the issues. We like to think we never prejudice any issue, but we are not going to be duped or fooled by the superficial appearance of a democratic process.

We know the difference. We know the difference between a process in which there is a truly free exchange of ideas and one in which there is not, and it appears here that there is not. We know the difference between a process where people have access to the ballot and can make their case to their fellow citizens and one in which there is not, and it appears here that there is not.

We know the difference between a society in which one can speak freely without fear of retribution based upon one's political views and one in which there is not that freedom, and we believe that the evidence here would show that there is not that freedom. And finally, we know the difference between an election that passes some superficial resemblance to a legitimate poll of the people and one in which people can make a real choice in a free environment, and we are not going to be duped or fooled by what appears to be a public relations proxy for an election rather than a real election.

What the Congress will do and what the administration will do as a result of this is something we will be thinking about in the weeks and months ahead. We strongly want to convey the message to those who would deny others their home, their rights, and in some cases, their lives, that we are aware of the facts and we will be following this process. We do not prejudice any individual or any party or any point of view, but this is not something that we are ignorant of and it is something we are going to be looking at closely. We will examine the full range of policy options available to us, not simply because it is in the best interests of people in Tajikistan

who yearn for freedom and the rule of law, but because it is in the best interests of the American people to ensure that freedom and the rule of law become the rule in the world and not the exception.

So we thank you very much for your participation this morning, and with that we declare the hearing adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Tajikistan: U.S. Position and Approach Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Joseph A. Presel

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee. My name is Joseph Presel and I am the Regional Affairs Coordinator for the New Independent States at the Department of State.

I thank Congressman Andrews for deciding to hold a hearing on Tajikistan, a politically and economically troubled land which we should not ignore. Tajikistan poses a challenge for the international community due to its history, geographical distance from us, its crippled economy, humanitarian and human rights problems, embryonic state structure and a political dialogue characterized as much by violence as by discourse. This combination of factors offers neither easy answers nor unilateral solutions. Instead it calls on us to look for creativity: bilaterally; with our partners; with international institutions to promote national reconciliation and foster the democratic process.

Since declaring its independence in 1991, Tajikistan has been crippled by a civil war, which has displaced some 400,000 people, left some 30,000 dead and rendered 60,000-80,000 homeless. The conflict has both political and religious dimensions and they cross its borders. Despite a recent ceasefire agreement between the government and opposition forces, the political situation remains fragile. Both sides seem ready to negotiate a settlement. We need to capitalize on this, working with the parties and international organizations, like CSCE and the UN, to end the fighting and develop a democratic dialogue.

International Involvement

The Russians naturally have a strong interest in promoting peace and political stability. Tens of thousands of ethnic Russians live there. Moscow has also been concerned about the situation on the Tajik border with Afghanistan. In response to the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan, Moscow took the lead among CIS colleagues in establishing a CIS Collective Peacekeeping Force (CPF) that includes troops from Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The CPF, with strong Russian participation, has played a constructive role in reducing the flow of weapons and drugs from Afghanistan. On the diplomatic front, the Russians have played an active role in fostering the negotiations between the government and the opposition. In Summer, 1993 President Yeltsin encouraged Head of State Rakhmanov to work on political reconciliation with the opposition. This effort has continued with regular visits of high-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry officials to the region to obtain a negotiated settlement.

In March, 1994 a formal political dialogue was initiated under the guidance of the UNSYG Special Envoy Ramon Piriz-Ballon. The first round of talks, in Moscow, yielded some partial success, with agreement reached to establish a joint commission/working group on refugees. The second round in July, 1994, in Tehran, proved more difficult. After that round the Government of Tajikistan announced plans to hold presidential elections in tandem with a constitutional referendum. The U.N. responded by suspending the talks and placing in limbo the political reconciliation process. This led Uzbekistan President Karimov and Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev to meet with Rakhmonov to help persuade the Tajikistan Government to take a range of steps to break the impasse.

Recent Positive Developments

Despite the alarming deterioration in the military situation in the last few months, there are hopeful signs that the Tajik government and the opposition remain committed to a political settlement. On September 7, the Tajik Parliament voted to postpone the country's presidential elections and constitutional referendum from September 25 to November 6. This helped to avoid an election for which the country was ill-prepared and which would have excluded participation by the political opposition.

The parliament also widened the nomination process and extended the registration period for candidates until October 27. Rakhmonov called for the opposition to participate in the political process and for all refugees to return. He also announced that 1,000 prisoners would be released under an August 25 amnesty. On September 12 the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a formal invitation to the CSCE to monitor the constitutional referendum and presidential election. We are hopeful that conditions will be created which will allow the broadest possible participation of Tajik political groups in the November election.

In another positive development, on September 17 senior representatives of the government and the opposition signed a temporary cease-fire agreement in Tehran. The agreement came after a week of new talks brokered by Piriz-Ballon. The full terms of the agreement are not yet public, but this breakthrough could lead to talks on a political settlement in Islamabad next month.

The Next Steps: U.S. Role

While Tajikistan is very far away, the effects of the Tajik civil conflict impinge on U.S. humanitarian, political and strategic objectives. In the first instance, the Tajik civil war has been one of the world's bloodiest in recent years, creating large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. The U.S. has a humanitarian interest in trying to help end the suffering of these people. Towards that end we have supported international peace efforts and provided significant relief aid, totaling over \$70 million in the last few years.

On the political/strategic side, we have a strong interest in supporting the sovereignty, stability and economic viability of Tajikistan. Deputy Secretary of State Talbott characterizes Tajikistan as the "soft underbelly" of the CIS. In the long term, our objective is to promote democratization and market-based economic reforms. However, before democratic and economic reforms can take firm root, the civil conflict must be stopped.

The Tajik parliament's decisions and the temporary cease-fire agreement are the essential first steps in restoring the peace and building democracy in Tajikistan. Where do we, bearing in mind that our leverage is limited, go from here?

-- We support a third round of UN-sponsored talks (in Islamabad). They would refine the cease-fire's implementation procedure and improve the atmosphere conducive for free and fair elections.

-- If these talks prove constructive, we will support additional talks (outside the region, to lessen local pressure).

-- We plan to send an inter-agency delegation headed by the Senior Coordinator for NIS Affairs, James Collins, to Dushanbe in October; that is before the November 6th presidential elections.

-- We will, of course, continue our humanitarian aid programs and are considering providing technical assistance to the presidential and subsequent parliamentary elections.

-- If the political situation stabilizes and the cease-fire holds, we intend to provide technical assistance, democracy building and economic reform.

We see some hope for Tajikistan. Regionalism, clan politics and religious differences have all taken their toll. It is, nevertheless, not naive to suggest that democratic institutions can take hold and flourish. Our continued support of the parties combined with our support for the UN and CSCE and the provision of economic assistance will, together, make a significant contribution to reconciliation.

Testimony before the Foreign Affairs Committee,
Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East
of the United States House of Representatives

Davlat Khudonazarov
Fellow, *United States Institute of Peace*

Dear Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your having invited me to speak with members of the United States House of Representatives. I am deeply grateful to you and your colleagues for directing your attention to my long-suffering homeland, Tajikistan.

The Tajiks are the oldest Indo-European and only Farsi-speaking people of Central Asia. The development of Tajik culture over the course of their history has enriched human culture in general. It is thus a great tragedy that Tajikistan is now known not for its poets and prophets, but rather for its civil war. Tajikistan's civil war is the most violent conflict on the territory of the former Soviet Union after the Second World War. The war has taken tens of thousands of lives. Every fifth person has been forced to flee his home.

An agricultural people who have cherished their rocky mountainside plots from time immemorial, the Tajiks have now been transformed into a mass of impoverished refugees. In particular, over 60,000 Tajiks continue to suffer and die in northern Afghanistan, in part due to the civil strife in their place of refuge. My family and I are among the one million Tajiks who are now refugees.

I am not a professional politician. Since the age of 14 I have worked at film studios. When I became a director, some of my films were banned. The severe censorship and lack of creative freedom in the Soviet Union gradually turned me into a dissident in the 1960s. In 1989 the citizens of Gorno-Badakhshon Oblast nominated me as a candidate for the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. Despite fierce pressure from Communist Party officials, over 90% of the population supported my candidacy in the elections. In 1990 members of the USSR Cinematographers Union elected me to be their chairman by an absolute majority.

In 1991 I was the main opposition candidate to the Communist Party in Tajikistan's first presidential elections. While the election results were falsified, even official statistics showed that every third person voted in favor of my program, which emphasized the need to build a state ruled by law as well as an open civil society. We intended to carry out wide-ranging

political and economic reforms as well as to change the very nature of power in Tajikistan. We wanted to democratize our society, give people their freedom, allow them to own property, and provide everyone with equal opportunities regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliation.

Throughout the election campaign I told intellectuals and peasants alike about the example of the United States. In particular, I told them about the way in which the Constitution and laws in this country worked to ensure the fairness of the political process and the rights of American citizens. I spoke about the values of American democracy, which could become a symbol of liberty and prosperity for my people. Yet, ironically, while speaking to the Tajik people about democracy in the United States, many American news agencies described me as the "candidate of the fundamentalists" in their reports on the elections.

Unfortunately, our people's hopes for a better future ended in tragedy. The old totalitarian power structure and its bureaucratic apparatus had no intention of allowing changes, political reforms, or compromises. The ruling elite initiated the war in order to preserve its power and its interests. This was the main reason for the tragedy. At the same time, opposition forces were also at fault in that they often were irresponsible in pursuing their political aims.

There are no winners in our civil war. There is only a vanquished people. Only a policy of mutual compromise and strict implementation of agreements can enable the conflicting sides to trust each other. Human trust is an essential component of morality. It is not something that you can legislate into the constitution, yet it is the underpinning for every minute's worth of human activity, interaction, and mutual tolerance. Human life without mutual trust quickly degenerates into a hellish existence.

I will consider myself a happy man if I ever live to see the day when the warring sides abandon the thirst for revenge, exchange hatred for generosity and forgiveness, and look one another directly in the eye with a feeling of trust. This will mark the beginning of a national consciousness. It is out of my desire to facilitate this trust that I halted my political activities as soon as the civil war broke out in May 1992 and devoted myself to peacemaking between the two sides.

I am grateful to the UN and the governments of several countries, especially Russia and the United States, for their efforts to foster peace in Tajikistan. At the same time, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask you and your colleagues in Congress as well as the government of the United States to intensify efforts on behalf of peace in Tajikistan. Only national reconciliation can lay the foundation for establishing a law-governed, secular democratic state in Tajikistan. But democracy cannot develop overnight. Serious, systematic efforts will be required to educate people about democracy in order to create conditions for the birth and development of a civil society and a law-based state. The fragile, anemic buds of democracy need assistance from a wide range of sources, including the United States government, NGOs, and private foundations dedicated to democratic change. I know that there are many countries in the world today that are asking help from the United States. And I also know that Americans sometimes feel overwhelmed by all of these requests, that they simply cannot offer help to every country that seeks it. Nevertheless, I make this plea to you on behalf of my small country.

The United States and world community needs to be concerned about Tajikistan's strife in part because of the destabilizing effect the conflict has far beyond the republic's borders. Tajikistan lies in the heart of Asia, surrounded by fragile countries and areas that can easily become flash points for political turmoil. These areas include the former Soviet republics of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Xinjiang province in China, Tibet, Kashmir, Punjab, and, most obviously, Afghanistan. Even geographically distant Russia is greatly affected by events in Tajikistan and Central Asia because of its numerous ties stemming from the Tsarist and Soviet eras. If peace does not come to Tajikistan in the near future, it may easily become a fuse for the entire explosive region, a spark for anarchy and chaos. Such a conflagration at the crossroads of Asia might come to threaten the very fabric of civilization itself in our increasingly interdependent world.

Russia has an important role to play in the peace process. The activities of Russian diplomacy over the past few months give us hope that peace may be established. In my opinion, Russia has also understood the hopelessness of its military activities and has chosen to pursue a political solution to the problem in order to attain peace quickly. This can be seen in the intensive bilateral negotiations brokered by the United Nations special representative Perez Ballon together with senior Russian diplomats.

I would once again urge the United States to support this process with all the means at its disposal. Russia has a considerable contingent of troops on Tajik territory. Together with the United Nations and other international organizations, these troops could successfully perform a peacemaking mission. There are realistically no other forces in the world that could carry out such a mission in my country. Tajikistan is not Haiti, and no one else, including the United States, is going to send troops there. At the same time, I ask for the United States' help and participation in pursuing a settlement because I am concerned about giving Russia a free hand to dictate events according to its own interests in the republics of the former Soviet Union, including Tajikistan.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the presidential elections scheduled for early November in Tajikistan. I do not believe that these elections will help the cause of peace and stabilization since they will be held in an environment where tens of thousands of people are running around with guns in their hands. Many armed bands are totally autonomous. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are unable to take part in the elections. The elections are merely window-dressing that will strengthen the hand of one of the two factions within the ruling coalition.

The organizers of the elections are either victims of their own illusions or else they themselves simply want to mislead the world. Many promises have been made, but what the country really needs is for political games to give way to a true understanding of Tajikistan's tragic situation.

Elections must be preceded by a lengthy process of negotiation, peacemaking, and the creation of a transitional government. I believe that a transitional government accepted by both sides that, with the assistance of the United Nations, other international organizations, as well as Russia, the United States, and other countries, could create the preconditions for building

state structures, including a constitution. Only then can real elections be held. In this way, truly democratic elections could indeed diffuse the social tensions in Tajikistan.

Mr. Chairman, it is now nighttime in Tajikistan. People are hoping for positive action from the United States. I think that every one of them is hoping that the new day will bring peace and tranquility. On behalf of all the citizens of Tajikistan, on behalf of all Tajiks who have been scattered all over the world as a result of the civil war, I would like to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues for demonstrating your concern about Tajikistan. These hearings are an important contribution to strengthening my people's hopes for the future.

May God help us overcome our faults and allow our hearts to become at peace with ourselves as well as with those around us.

U.S. Policy toward Tajikistan

Testimony presented to the
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East
The Hon. Robert E. Andrews, Chairman

Barnett R. Rubin
Associate Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of
Central Asia, Columbia University
Acting Director, Center for Preventive Diplomacy, Council on Foreign
Relations

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend and thank you both for holding this hearing and for your work in placing the plight of Tajikistan on the Congressional agenda. I am also grateful for the opportunity you have provided me to testify here today. In addition to my statement, which I will summarize, I have brought an article that presents a more detailed analysis of the conflict in Tajikistan. I respectfully request to submit these for the record.

Mr. Chairman, Tajikistan was the poorest Soviet Republic and the republic most dependent on aid from Moscow. It became nominally independent without a clear national identity, an integrated territory, a viable economic base for the livelihood of its people or the finances of its government, or genuine national security forces. It shares a lengthy and uncontrollable border and ancient ties with Afghanistan, where the Soviet-installed government collapsed as the USSR broke up. The US and USSR had made Afghanistan into the third largest importer of weapons in the world and the largest importer among poor countries during the previous decade. Afghanistan has also become the world's largest producer of opium.

It is therefore not surprising, Mr. Chairman, that soon after becoming independent, Tajikistan collapsed into civil war. Charges that the conflict results from extremist ideologies, whether the supposed Communism, pan-Turkism, or Russian imperialism of the government's supporters, or the alleged Tajik chauvinism or Islamic fundamentalism of the opposition, should be evaluated in light of

Tajikistan's vacuum of institutions and plethora of arms. These structural conditions virtually guaranteed that inevitable disputes over the future of the country would escalate into chaotic and bloody warfare, and that neighboring states would act, sometimes brutally, to protect their own security.

I thus reject the stark and deceptive alternatives in which policy toward this region is sometimes depicted: we should neither ally with hardliners in Moscow to support the regime now in power in Dushanbe as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism nor support the opposition as a democratic and nationalist alternative to neo-communism and Russian-Uzbek imperialism. As I testified four years ago about Afghanistan, the fundamental problem in Tajikistan is not ideological polarization but social and political fragmentation.

The aim of U.S. policy should be to promote international guarantees of a peaceful interim period of dialogue during which the people of Tajikistan can attempt to build basic political, social, and economic institutions that will enable them to live as a nation-state with a civil society. This means supporting the sovereignty of Tajikistan, while recognizing that national sovereignty today necessarily includes both democratic decentralization of power and participation in institutions for international cooperation.

Before proceeding to more specific recommendations, let me sketch the salient elements of the current situation. The current government and the exiled opposition consist of loose and fractious coalitions. The sides differ partly in ideology and partly in allegiance to different ethnic, sub-ethnic, and regional groups in the country.

Elements of the armed opposition conduct raids from bases in north Afghanistan, where they are assisted by some of the Afghan groups formerly aided by the US, Pakistan, and Arab Islamists, who are still active. Other elements of the opposition are in Moscow or Iran.

The government is aided by Russian border guards and mainly Russian troops under command of the Commonwealth of Independent States. These forces describe themselves as peacekeepers but have not been recognized as such by the U.N. Uzbekistan both participates in the CIS forces and is providing aid in the field of internal security.

The U.N. has organized three rounds of talks between the government and the Coordination Council of the opposition. The CSCE has also established a mission in Dushanbe, which has assisted in organizing these talks. Last week's round in Tehran led to an agreement on a cease-fire monitored by the U.N., release of prisoners by both sides, and other confidence building measures. It is too early to judge how effectively the agreement will be implemented. Besides the U.N. and CSCE, the foreign ministries of Russia and Iran have played indispensable and constructive roles in supporting the negotiation process. The role of Uzbekistan remains somewhat unclear to me.

As that these negotiations were taking place, the government initiated a unilateral process of political change. With little public discussion, it promulgated a new constitution and announced presidential elections, originally for this week, now postponed to November 6. The political reforms did not extend to legalizing the banned opposition parties, and the opposition regarded these moves as an attempt by the government to preempt the negotiations in order to present itself to the world as legitimate.

US policy toward this conflict should have four elements:

1. A multilateral policy of support for the efforts of the U.N. and the CSCE to find a negotiated solution and safeguard human rights.
2. A bilateral policy toward Russia, urging that its preponderance in the region be used to strengthen sovereignty, democracy, protection for human rights, and genuine international cooperation in Central Asia.
3. A bilateral policy toward Tajikistan, encouraging a negotiated settlement and democratization, and providing aid for humanitarian needs, construction of civil society, and, after progress toward safeguarding human rights, economic development.
4. Integration of Tajikistan into a framework for regional security in Central and Southwest Asia, in which a top priority must be the quest for the stabilization of Afghanistan.

Let me discuss these briefly in turn. The U.N. and the CSCE are collaborating closely in both organizing negotiations between the

warring parties and monitoring human rights and humanitarian conditions within the country. The US should fully and unreservedly support these negotiations despite the participation of Iran, which, as I noted, appears to be playing a constructive role. We should also support and fund the humanitarian work of UN agencies, in particular UNHCR, which is doing an outstanding job of refugee repatriation and protection under demanding conditions. We should also stand behind the strong and largely negative judgments of the government's unilateral political reforms issued by the CSCE.

With respect to Russia, we must make it clear that, first, we have a bilateral policy toward independent Tajikistan, which we conduct directly. Second, we recognize that Russia has legitimate security concerns in Central Asia, as Central Asia has in Russia. Given the institutional vacuum in Tajikistan, we should recognize, as do all parties to the conflict, that during the interim period Russian and CIS forces can play a positive role, but that their role will be positive only if they guarantee the security of a negotiated settlement and political liberalization. If the parties to the conflict reach an agreement on such a transition and codify a role for the Russian and CIS forces, the U.S. should support the establishment of UN or CSCE bodies to monitor those forces, as is apparently called for in the recent agreement. Indeed, the recognition of the role of Russian military forces in return for the protection of opposition political activity appears to be the bargain at the heart of the UN-sponsored negotiations.

In such a context, the US could remain neutral as to how Tajikistan may be integrated into various frameworks for cooperation in security or economic matters within the former Soviet space. Any decisions to join such organizations taken freely by a freely-chosen government in Tajikistan would not conflict with the interests of the U.S. We should, however, oppose any attempt by imperial revivalists to coerce the former republics into unwarranted forms of dependence on Moscow. I do not believe that such goals animate current, official Russian policy toward Tajikistan.

In our bilateral relations with Tajikistan, we should emphasize our recognition of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and our insistence that these can only be guaranteed by political liberalization and, ultimately, democratization.

While we can provide technical assistance with elections, we should remember that the fairness of elections is mainly political, not

technical; an honest vote count in an election where the opposition cannot participate is still not a free and fair election. Genuine democratization requires opening the society to all non-violent political currents, including Islamic ones. Furthermore, democracy is much more than elections, and the heart of our support for democratization should be in support of the establishment of civil society, including legal institutions, independent media, and associations. We should reject attempts to elicit sympathy for human rights violations on the grounds that the government is dealing with our common enemy, "Islamic fundamentalism."

Both humanitarian aid, and support for the building of institutions and civil society should be provided unconditionally. Development aid, however, must await better protection of human rights and the establishment of greater legality. It need not, in my view, await full democratization, which is likely to be elusive for some time.

Finally, establishing public order, freedom, and security in Tajikistan will remain difficult as long as the region as a whole remains unsettled. Gorbachev called Afghanistan a bleeding wound, and we all know that an untreated wound becomes infected and spreads. The US bears a special responsibility, as our poorly monitored and indiscriminate arms transfers to the most extremist groups exacerbated a disaster caused by Soviet aggression. If we are not already doing so, we need to bring to bear our full diplomatic and intelligence capabilities in support of the UN's efforts to resolve the civil war and cut off the external sources of support for the warlords.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to answer any questions.

**Testimony presented to
The House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East
The Honorable Robert E. Andrews, Chairman**

**Anthony H. Richter
Special Advisor to the President
The Soros Foundations**

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for inviting me to testify before this Committee today on behalf of THE SOROS FOUNDATIONS.

My name is Anthony Richter. I am Special Advisor to the President of the Soros Foundations. For the past seven years I have served as a principal advisor of George Soros in his global philanthropic activities and more to the point, I have traveled twice in the past several months to Tajikistan on behalf of the Soros Humanitarian Foundation for Tajikistan. Since 1979 Mr. Soros has built a network of foundations to support the development of an open society throughout the world. George Soros also founded The Central European University in Budapest and Prague in 1990, and in 1993, the Open Society Institute which serves as an intellectual center dedicated to promoting and supporting the ideals of open society.

My testimony focuses on the nature of American interest in the outcome of the bitter civil war that has traumatized the former Soviet Republic of Tajikistan. The statements here arise from a profound concern over the security, humanitarian, and human rights issues raised by the conflict in Tajikistan. The concern of the Soros Foundations' has been expressed not only in words, but in deeds as well. Over the past year the Soros Foundations have spent nearly \$1 million in Tajikistan to jumpstart the process of reconstruction and development, to monitor human rights abuses, to alleviate the suffering of refugees, and to help search for peaceful solutions.

From May 1992 to January 1993 a brutal civil war visited vast destruction on Tajikistan when various regional factions took up arms against one another in the names of communism, democracy, and Islam. Tajikistan, already the poorest country to emerge from the former Soviet Union, has suffered terrible consequences: up to 50,000 people have lost their lives and over 650,000 people -- more than a tenth of the population -- fled in terror. Some 100,000 crossed the border into Afghanistan, including leaders and fighters of the defeated opposition forces. Unknown numbers perished during the panicky flight: some were shot, others drowned when improvised rafts made of tractor tire inner tubes capsized. More perished in makeshift refugee camps in Afghanistan. In addition, more than 35,000 homes were destroyed, some

were wrecked in the course of battle, and soldiers on both sides destroyed still more in ethnic-cleansing actions. Tens of thousands of families were suddenly left without shelter.

Clearly, the civil war in Tajikistan has been the costliest conflict in the former Soviet Union. And paradoxically it was, until recently, the most obscure conflict in that part of the world. A year ago, together with Refugees International, the independent, Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization, we helped convene an informal, nonpartisan forum of concerned humanitarian aid workers, foreign diplomats, scholars, government officials, human rights advocates, and journalists to discuss this neglected crisis. The Tajikistan Open Forum, as it is called, has succeeded beyond anyone's expectations: more than 60 organizations come together regularly to hear briefings about this tragic country, that even today is convulsed in violence. You are to be commended Mr. Chairman, for recognizing the growing seriousness of the situation, and for taking the initiative to introduce a resolution on this matter, and for calling the first Congressional inquiry into the crisis in Tajikistan.

These hearings today are particularly timely for several reasons: First of all, in five days' time **Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrives in the United States to address the United Nations and hold a summit with President Clinton.** The question of Russian peacekeeping in Tajikistan will certainly arise since the Russian government has announced it will submit proposals to the present session of the UN General Assembly. Second, in July **the government of Tajikistan suddenly announced Presidential elections for this week (September 25), only to postpone them until November 6,** under strong international pressure from the United Nations, the CSCE, the Russian Federation, and other governments. This hiatus, which should probably be extended, given the massive violence it has provoked, gives us another opportunity to reflect on the priorities of US policy in these circumstances. Third, just last week, **Tajikistan, which has never regained stability, erupted into some of the worst violence since the end of the civil war, with pitched battles involving up to a thousand rebel troops,** inside the country, in the region of Tavildara. (See map, attached). This past weekend the warring parties agreed a ceasefire until November 6, during the third round of UN-sponsored negotiations between government and opposition representatives in Teheran, led by General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali's Special Envoy Xavier Piriz-Ballon.

Why should Americans be interested in yet another ethnic civil war, fought in a remote land most people have never heard of? Why this week, when all American eyes are on Haiti, should we focus on Tajikistan? What is the US national interest here? I would like to put forward the following reasons we should pay attention to

this conflict

1) The outcome of the conflict in Tajikistan affects the security of this region and the US relationship with Russia. The United States is interested in seeing Russia emerge as an open, democratic society that is a responsible partner within the international community. Undoubtedly, Russia has a legitimate interest in Tajikistan's stability, as it neighbors volatile Afghanistan. According to many accounts, the presence of Russian troops has largely played a stabilizing role in the conflict. However Russia has displayed an exaggerated tendency to identify Tajikistan's border as its own. It has intervened to stabilize the situation militarily, posting 25,000 troops there last year. As long as this Russian intervention exists outside the mandate of the international community, that is the United Nations, it may give encouragement to those in Russia who seek to regather the old Soviet Union by military means. The rise of such forces would not be in US interests. Even more directly, as the US has sought to garner international support for its invasion of Haiti, US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright has indicated support for formalizing Russia's peacekeeping role within the Commonwealth of Independent States.¹ Before this gains approval at the United Nations, the matter deserves some scrutiny.

2) Central Asia is an area rich in oil and gas. US companies are investing in strategic resources in neighboring republics at an unprecedented rate. Most notably, Chevron signed a \$20 billion Chevron oil exploration and exploitation deal in Kazakhstan. The importance of these energy resources and the income they produce will only become more important as time goes on to the United States. Their viability could be jeopardized by a widening conflict in Tajikistan.

3) The Tajik Civil War threatens to create a second "Afghanistan" in Central Asia. Several factors in Tajikistan and the surrounding region threaten its long term stability. These are: regionalism, the revival of Islam, a rise in heroin cultivation and trade, and the proliferation of weapons. As is widely known, the central issue motivating the conflict in Tajikistan is regionalism which if unchecked will continue to pull the country apart into warring areas. In addition, Tajik Islamic leaders exiled in Afghanistan have become vulnerable to offers of humanitarian aid as well as military assistance from opportunistic Islamic groups. The continuation of the war and the destruction of the local economy has been accompanied by an increase in

¹ Financial Times, September 7, 1994

opium cultivation and trade. The ongoing war has also allowed for a proliferation of weapons in the region. These four factors threaten to make Tajikistan a disunited, warring country similar to its southern neighbor, Afghanistan.

4) Tajikistan affects an entire region that is vital to US security interests.

As Middle East specialist Daniel Pipes recently wrote: "Peace and stability in the region depend in large part on Afghanistan, and its future will be determined by developments in Tajikistan. Protracted civil war in Tajikistan means Central Asia will burn."² Even more worrisome is that there are five nuclear powers in the region: Russia, India, China, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan. Should the violence widen further it could elevate tensions among all of these each of which possess weapons of mass destruction.

5) The inability of the international community to stabilize what seem to be remote, isolated or internal disturbances has become a leading threat to global security. The crisis in Tajikistan has drawn attention to the humanitarian tragedy of the Tajik people. Restoring their homes, their economy, and peace in their land has become the responsibility of the international governmental organizations such as the CSCE, the United Nations, UNICEF, UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other nongovernmental humanitarian relief agencies. As we have learned in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Cuba and Haiti the post-Cold War world is particularly susceptible to the spillover effects of ethnic conflict, civil war, and forced migration.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest directions that US policy should take with regard to the future of Tajikistan.

1) The UN Process. The United States should place a high priority on support for the UN-sponsored negotiations process. The United States should also support the ceasefire announced this past weekend between government forces and opposition fighters. All previous ceasefires have failed, and like them, this one has been violated by ongoing fighting within Tajikistan itself. The United States should also recognize the considerable contribution of Russian troops to keeping peace in the region. At the same time, their activities should be subject to the same mandate of UN peacekeeping operations throughout the world and placed under UN command.

² Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era. Former Soviet Muslim Republics Change the Middle East," in Central Asia and the World, Michael Mandelbaum, ed., p. 69

2) The CSCE Process. The announcement of Presidential elections has played a destabilizing role in Tajikistan, notably by halting the negotiation process and by increasing military activity by the armed opposition. The United States should, through the CSCE and its own direct channels advocate the postponement of Presidential elections until the successful completion of negotiations between the government and the opposition. This will allow for the lifting of bans against opposition parties and provide for a more stable climate for the conduct of free, fair, and safe elections. Well-prepared elections would create legitimacy for a new government. Should it not prove possible to secure a postponement, the United States should take advantage of the current two-month postponement to mobilize support monitoring of the elections by nongovernmental organizations, such as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, as well as by the CSCE.

3) Humanitarian and Refugee Affairs.

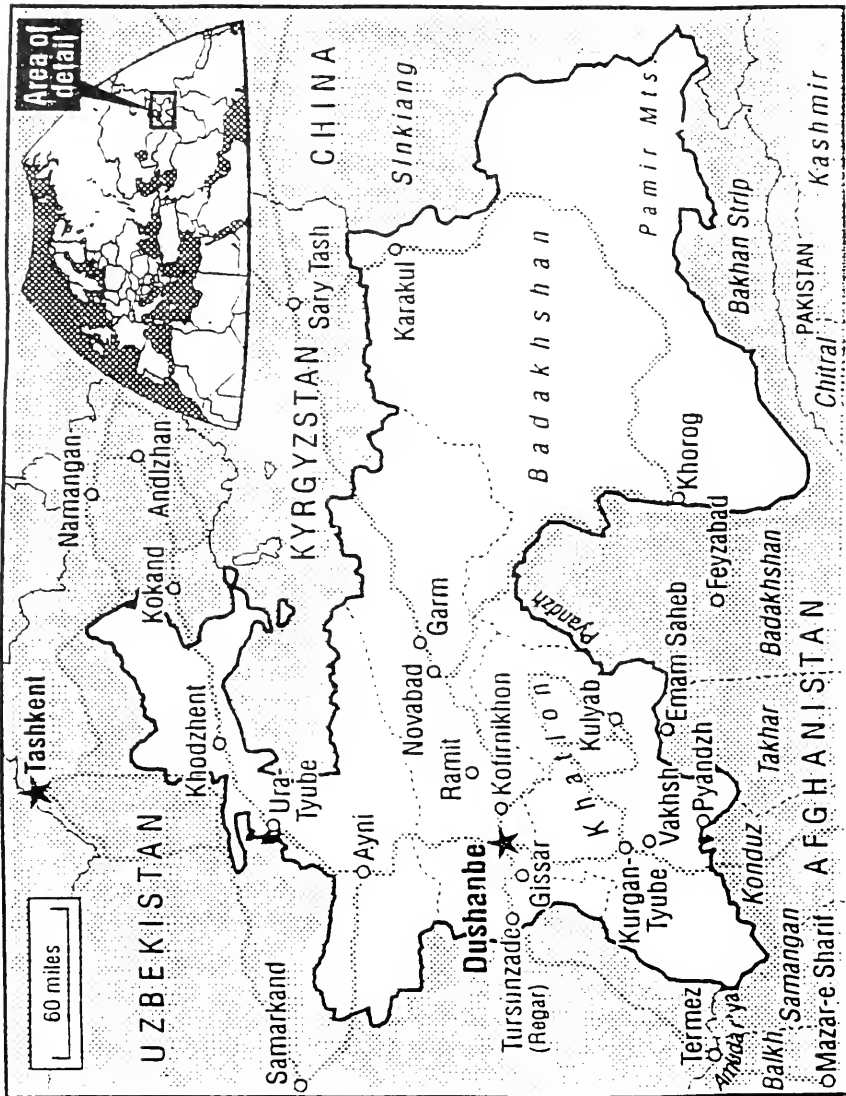
The United States should also make every effort to deliver assistance to Tajik refugees in Afghanistan. Numbering in the tens of thousands these refugees have suffered the intense hardships of their own civil war, and now in exile, are subject to the torments of the conflict in Afghanistan. Provided the refugees are willing to come home, the United States should support the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide for their speedy repatriation to Tajikistan. Their repatriation should be conducted under with dignity and respect to the returning refugees and provide for their safety upon their return.

4) Democratization and Economic Development. Obviously, it will require years for Tajikistan to recover from the trauma that has suffered. The United States has contributed significantly to Tajikistan's needs for food, and more recently for the reconstruction and development. United States assistance has been tremendously effective. This assistance should be maintained. If there is improvement in Tajikistan's human rights performance, and progress in other democratic reforms, economic assistance should also be given. To ensure that it moves as quickly as possible along the path to democratization, openness, and tolerance, the United States should make a priority of those foreign assistance programs which would promote the values and institutions of an open society, regard for human rights, appreciation for a free press, freedom of conscience, association and religion.

Mr. Chairman, Tajikistan, the very poorest of states to emerge from the Soviet Union, the republic which has suffered more than any other, has been too neglected - until today Tajikistan needs the support of the United States -- and it is in American interest to pay attention.


With your permission, I would like to submit this prepared statement to be entered in the record, together with an attached article I have recently published on this subject. Mr. Chairman, thank you again for convening this important hearing. I would be glad to answer your questions.

ATTACHMENT: MAP



REPORTAGE

Anthony Richter is special adviser to the president of the Soros Foundations and travels frequently in the former Soviet Union



Springtime in Tajikistan

Anthony Richter

In a remote corner of Central Asia, bounded by narrow rivers and jagged peaks, lies the small former Soviet republic of Tajikistan. Bordering China, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, this country of 5.6 million people is part of what Eduard Shevardnadze calls "a crescent of conflict," spanning from the Black Sea to the Pamir Mountains, that has erupted in violence along the frontiers of the former Soviet Union since its collapse. Tajikistan has had more than its share of trouble. From May 1992 to January 1993, a brutal civil war visited vast destruction on Tajikistan when regional factions took up arms in the names of communism, democracy, and Islam.

The fighting escalated quickly into a cataclysm of violence that claimed at least 30,000 lives, though the precise number of casualties will probably never come to light. Over 650,000—more than a tenth of the population—fled in terror. Some 100,000 crossed the border into Afghanistan, including leaders and fighters of the defeated opposition forces. Unknown numbers perished during the panicky flight: some were shot, others drowned when improvised rafts made of tractor tire inner tubes capsized, more perished in refugee camps on the other side.

More than 35,000 homes were destroyed, leaving tens of thousands of families without shelter. Some were wrecked in the course of battle, and soldiers on both sides destroyed still more in ethnic-cleansing actions. As testimony to this methodical violence, a tractor stood recently in the center of the southern town of Shaartuz; it had been perversely retrofitted with a battering

ram. The charred rubble of mud-brick ghost towns remains a vivid reminder of the civilian toll of the war.

With the help of such international organizations as the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), many of the displaced have returned home in recent months to rebuild and plant spring crops. Still, Tajikistan is anything but stable today.

Waging Peace

The trouble began after Tajikistan held presidential elections in 1991, when regional ethnic identities divided the country. Incumbent hard-line Communists from the north prevailed in the voting over opposition groups—moderate Islamists, nationalists, and democratic reformers—from other regions. The opposition contested the results, and the government cracked down. In the face of mass demonstrations, the government eventually offered opposition leaders several government portfolios, but the protests persisted. When demonstrators occupied a central square in the capital, the government assembled its own supporters in another square. In a now infamous move, Tajik president Rakhmon Nabiyev is said to have distributed thousands of automatic weapons to his followers. The opposition managed a preliminary victory in the fighting that broke out between the factions and forced Nabiyev's resignation. The government then re-formed in the name of national reconciliation, a concept to which it has not quite lived up.

Tajikistan's civil war sent shock waves through its neighbors in the former Soviet

Union. Their alarm had much to do with the fact that in April 1992 Afghanistan's *mujahidin* commanders, richly armed with U.S.- and Soviet-made weapons, began to feud among themselves. Persistent instability in Afghanistan fueled Russian fears of a spill-over across the border into historically Muslim Tajikistan. These anxieties materialized in May, when civil war erupted in Tajikistan itself. To Americans, Russia's dilemma in Tajikistan may suggest an eerie parallel. As Raymond Bonner recently wrote, "Central Asia is, in effect, Russia's Central America, and one can hardly avoid a strange déjà vu as the former core of the Soviet Union agonizes over the vision of an ideological insurgency toppling countries in its own backyard."¹ Russia feared that if the border went unguarded, Tajikistan would become a conduit for drug traffickers, opposition terrorists, arms dealers, and, most threatening, Islamic fundamentalists.

Russia and Uzbekistan (whose authoritarian leader, Islam Karimov, has little tolerance for instability) reacted swiftly. In fall 1992, they sent in a well-equipped force to stop the fighting between the Tajik government and the opposition.² This force openly supported government troops and helped them defeat opposition fighters. After their victory, government forces began a bloody retaliation against opposition supporters, and opposition parties were banned.

A year later, a CIS-Tajik collective security treaty guaranteed the permanent presence of the multinational force. Now numbering 25,000 men, it polices Tajikistan and patrols the long Tajik-Afghan border delineated by the Amu River and the towering Pamir Mountains. Neither of these has proved particularly easy to defend. In July 1993, rebel guerrillas attacked and briefly captured a border post, killing 25 soldiers, mostly Russians, and in fall 1993, hundreds of opposition fighters crossed into Tajikistan, wreaking havoc for several days.

In Moscow, the Russian involvement has prompted critics of open-ended military so-

lutions, such as historian Yury Afanasyev, to charge that Russia is waging an undeclared war in Tajikistan. Others have warned that the country will become a "second Afghanistan," implying a Vietnam-like quagmire. Western opinion and policymakers, led by Zbigniew Brzezinski, are also concerned about Russian involvement in Tajikistan, viewing it in the broader geopolitical context of Russian foreign policy with respect to its near abroad and its actions in the former republics of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The Russian term for the forces it sent abroad, *Kollektivnye mirovotvorcheskije sily*, literally means "collective peacemaking forces." Undoubtedly, the KMS troops were effective in stabilizing Tajikistan. But in light of their actions, they could hardly be thought of as traditional peacekeepers. Nevertheless, the Russian government openly aspires to the legitimacy and authority that a U.N. mandate would give their actions. The KMS emblazoned the sides of its vehicles with light blue shields that bear an uncanny resemblance to the insignia used by U.N. peace-keepers. Russia makes no secret of the fact that it would like to exchange its logo for the genuine article. The United Nations has demurred, stating that it can hardly give a stamp of approval to actions begun without its authority, command, or control.

Moreover, the stability that has emerged from this peacekeeping is a superficial one. Infighting among victors in the civil war plagues the capital, Dushanbe, and periodic skirmishes between government and opposition forces threaten to destabilize the situation. The most prominent victim of the violence fell on the night of March 10 this year, when unknown gunmen broke into the residence of Deputy Prime Minister Moensho Nazarshoev and shot him dead. The government had named Nazarshoev to head its delegation to negotiate with the opposition. The authorities were quick—some say suspiciously so—to provide a detailed account of the murder, linking it to armed opposition

forces and characterizing it as a harbinger of a long-awaited spring offensive by the opposition. Others doubted this theory, indicating that the attack may have been organized by hard-line groups opposed to negotiating with the opposition. Whatever the identity of these particular assassins, opposition guerrillas, trained in Afghanistan or hidden in Tajikistan's Pamir Mountains, have mounted intermittent military attacks, prompting the KMS to take preemptive measures against the much-discussed spring offensive, which has yet to materialize.

In the latest attempt to prevent such infiltration, the KMS, under the command of Lt. Gen. Boris Pyankov, conducted military exercises right after Ramadan this spring, the time judged most likely for the opposition to renew its attacks. On a sunny day in early March, shortly before exercises were due to begin, I encountered scores of tanks and armored personnel carriers dug into the grassy fields along the road to the Afghan border. At Nizhny Pyandzh, where all that separates Tajikistan from Afghanistan is a narrow stretch of river with low banks on either side, tank treads scored the hills and camouflage tents dotted the horizons. What at first appeared to me without my glasses to be a large herd of grazing cows, upon closer inspection turned out to be dozens of tanks, armored vehicles, mobile radar stations, and parked helicopters. For anyone questioning the force's intent—whether in Dushanbe, Washington, Kabul, or Moscow—the KMS position along the Afghan-Tajik border seemed designed to demonstrate its commitment to protect the region.

Apparently, the KMS decided to scale back exercises after the Tajik opposition complained that it was sending the wrong signal about negotiations. But as I drove down a gentle slope to the border that spring day, it seemed otherwise. A bored young Russian soldier stepped out of his guardhouse to say that we could not cross because exercises would start in a few days. As if to underscore the point, a tank fired

from a position not far behind us. A moment later it fired again. We got back in the car and drove up the hill, away from the border. Squadrons of MiG and Sukhoi jets circled overhead. A line of helicopter gunships appeared over the hills directly in front of us. They dropped men in parachutes and veered off, vanishing behind the hills. Then, the helicopter gunships, about a dozen of them, suddenly reappeared, this time swooping low over our car, and flew off toward Afghanistan.

School of Hard Knocks

A scant 65 years ago Tajikistan did not exist. Tajikistan, the poorest country to emerge from the Soviet Union, was a remote land in the emirate of Bokhara. "Tajiks," people who spoke a local form of Farsi, lived everywhere from the legendary cultural centers of Samarkand and Bokhara in the west to Afghanistan in the south. During the Bolshevik revolution and civil war, the region that is now Tajikistan became a stronghold of Islamic resistance to Communist rule. After the civil war, which lasted here until 1928, Moscow created an autonomous Tajik region within Uzbekistan, proceeding from an artificial Soviet concept of nationality based mostly on the Tajik language. The Soviets denied Tajik's Persian roots, just as they once insisted that "Moldovan" differed from Romanian. To emphasize its supposed linguistic uniqueness, the Soviets replaced Tajik's Arabic script with Cyrillic, and effectively isolated Tajiks from contact with Iran and Afghanistan.

Over the years of Soviet rule, the concept of a Tajik nation never really took hold. Moscow granted the Tajiks nominal sovereignty within the Soviet Union in 1929, but Samarkand and Bokhara did not come with the package. In good Stalinist fashion, Moscow gave these cities to Uzbekistan. To complicate matters, the region of Khojand, in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley, was renamed Leninabad and incorporated into Tajikistan. As it did elsewhere in the former

Soviet Union, Moscow turned Tajikistan into an experiment in national engineering. This experiment resulted in a country 60 percent Tajik and 23 percent Uzbek, with the remainder of the population comprising Russian and other nationalities.

As opposed to other republics, where national consciousness was more stable, in Tajikistan something went seriously wrong. Moscow's efforts to cultivate a Tajik Soviet identity instead produced new local identities based on regional alliances. In line with the "divide-and-conquer" method of rule, Communist party power flowed almost exclusively to the more Russified and industrialized northerners, the Khojandis, who were deemed its most reliable representatives. The Khojandis adopted the structure of the Communist party but used it as a means to rule through traditional power relationships and extended families. As their chief clients they developed ties with southern Tajiks, the Kulyabis.¹ For nearly 50 years, Khojandis dominated the highest positions in the land and, together with the Kulyabis, monopolized power.

During the 1930s, collectivization transformed much of Tajikistan's arable land into one big cotton plantation. Stalin resettled people needed to work the crops from the mountain regions of Garm and Pamir to the southern lowlands. These mountain people lived in separate communities from the Uzbeks and Kulyabis who also populated this region; while the Khojandis ruled together with the Kulyabis, the Garmis and Pamiris worked the fields. Though many prospered, they perceived themselves as alienated and disenfranchised. As a group of Pamiri and Garmi refugees recently told me, "We were like the black slaves in America." By this discriminatory distribution of power, Moscow helped create hostile regional ethnic groups where no particular ethnic consciousness had existed before.

With little in the way of options when *perestroika* appeared in Tajikistan, the resentful Garmis and Pamiris sought refuge in Is-

lamic and democratic opposition movements. After 70 years of repressive Soviet rule, popular interest in Islam should not have been so hastily labeled a fundamentalist revival. Leaders such as Akbar Turdzhonzoda and Mullah Abdullo Nuri, who headed the Islamic Renaissance party, simply provided a forum for aggrieved groups in Tajikistan and a language in which to discuss solutions. However, the Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek governments grasped the political expediency of calling it a "radical" Islamic movement, to which almost any act could be attributed, and whose alleged activities could be used to alienate the United States.

But unlike Iranians, who are Shiites, Tajik Muslims are moderate Sunnis. Tajik Pamiris, Ismaili and followers of the Aga Khan, are even more moderate. Before the war, the Islamic groups had as their chief political allies the Moscow-oriented Russian-speaking Tajik intelligentsia that supported Gorbachev and Yeltsin. They sought to promote a reform-minded, Tajik Islamist democracy, not a clerical state. If Islamic groups grew militant, they did so in reaction to castigation, violence, and exile. When civil war broke out, however, and undisciplined bands of fighters took up arms against each other, religion and politics played less of a role in deciding the side on which someone fought than did region of origin.

Within Tajikistan itself, the Khojandi-dominated government victory depended most heavily on the services of two Kulyabi warlords, Faizali Saidov and convicted murderer Sangak Safarov, who vowed to exterminate the "*vovchiks*," or Islamic and democratic forces—code words for Garmis and Pamiris.² The two leaders ended up killing each other in a dispute, but other warlords the government retained effective control over southern Tajikistan. There, with its mixture of Uzbeks and Kulyabi, Garmi, and Pamiri Tajiks, the opposing forces targeted civilians based on ethnic origin. It is not uncommon to see houses that escaped destruc-

tion in the fighting there marked "Uzbeks live here—don't touch!" This kind of ethnic targeting still continues, though more sporadically. This spring, humanitarian workers from Médecins sans Frontières recounted a chilling incident in which Kulyabi soldiers stopped one of their vehicles at a checkpoint. When the soldiers discovered from their documents that one of the local staff in the car was a Garmi, he was taken out, beaten, and shot to death as the others looked on.

For refugees coming home from Afghanistan and other regions, the life to which they are returning involves some hard lessons about the pernicious results of ethnic strife. After the Garmis and Pamiris fled the south, the Kulyabis and Uzbeks occupied their houses, stole their cars, and took their jobs. Even today, when most of the Garmis and Pamiris have come back and overtakes of harassment have largely ceased, armed Kulyabi fighters can still behave like minor potentates, perpetuating petty thefts, making threats, and administering beatings. Such behavior, unleashed by the war, has proved difficult to control.

In southern Tajikistan I came upon a half-burned-out village, or *qishloq*, in the region of Kabodien, home to returned Garmi refugees from Afghanistan. A dozen or so Kulyabi fighters, armed with automatic weapons and wearing border guards' uniforms or track suits, stood around joking and chewing tobacco as several grim little boys ran back and forth carrying stacks of books from one of the buildings. The soldiers had decided to set up their barracks in the village schoolhouse and had "enlisted" the students to empty it of their belongings. After their leader, Commander Bobodzho, who was wearing a blue track suit and carrying a gun, gave a nod, the soldiers explained that they are veterans of the Afghan War, victors in the Tajik civil war, Kulyabi men. One claimed to have fought as a mercenary for the Bosnian Serbs. "Look at these barefoot kids," said a sergeant, pointing his AK-

47 at the boys. "What do they need with a school? They should help their parents rebuild those houses, work in the fields." Another confided, "Really, things were so tough back in Kulyab last year our people ate the bark off of trees. We won't touch anyone, we just need a place to live." After my several attempts to register official complaints back in Dushanbe, it is clear to me how little the central government can or will do about warlords like Bobodzho.

I returned to the *qishloq* a few weeks later. Not only were Commander Bobodzho's men still there, but the school staff was outfitting a second building for the soldiers' use, leaving only one building for the students. As I walked around the schoolyard, a little wizened man wearing a Kyrgyz cap trailed behind us. When we asked his name, he only told us that he used to be the school's director. At one time, School No. 37 was the pride of the entire Kabodien region. With over 700 students and more than 40 teachers, the school was also the largest in the area. Prosperous Garmi plantation workers poured their own resources into making it a model school. It offered foreign languages, such as Russian and English, and had its own modern language lab. Its cafeteria served hot meals to the farmers' children. It boasted a field house, playgrounds, and an assembly hall. All this was lost the day the Garmis fled to Afghanistan; the school director told us. When they returned, they found the school gutted; every last desk and chair, and even the linoleum from the floors, was gone. A sense of irony must have inspired the fighters to pry off the plaque in the assembly hall that featured Lenin's portrait along with his famous words: "Study, study, study."

Prospects for Peace

Tajikistan's ordeal and the intervention of its former Soviet neighbors has not escaped the attention of the larger world. The United Nations has established a mission of observers in Tajikistan, as has the Conference

on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Tajikistan is a member nation, owing to its former Soviet status). Crowds of appreciative returnees welcome UNHCR, Red Cross, and Médecins sans Frontières vehicles as they travel throughout Tajikistan to deliver relief. But in a world riveted by Bosnia, Rwanda, and Haiti, Tajikistan has drawn little financial support from donor nations. With many of the displaced returned, the UNHCR talks of going home. There is also talk of peace—or talk of talks about peace.

On the diplomatic front, progress has been made since the fighting stopped last year. U.N. secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed a special envoy, who in past months has shuttled intensively between Russia, Tajikistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan to organize the first U.N.-supervised negotiations between the government and the leaders of the exiled opposition. President Boris Yeltsin has used Russia's leverage over the government in Dushanbe to bring it to the negotiating table, conceding that military force alone cannot resolve the conflict. Top exiled Tajik opposition leaders have formed a Coordination Center of Tajik Democratic Forces, linking Islamic, nationalist, and democratic leaders to present a unified negotiating position to the government. In April, they sent a mid-level delegation to Moscow for the first official talks with the opposition.

The question remains whether the talks will yield results. Both Russia and the United Nations have had to push hard to get the Tajik government, fresh from a military victory, to negotiate. At the same time as it agreed to speak with the opposition, the government has prepared a series of political reforms that the opposition may have to accept as a fait accompli: a new constitution, new political parties, and new elections are all planned for this year. Several members of the opposition who have been held in prison for over a year are now being tried, and the procurator general's office has renewed indictments for treason against every

major opposition leader. With warlords in control of southern Tajikistan, pressure from the United Nations and Moscow, and the opposition knocking at the door, the government should want peace. But a negotiated settlement might well force it to share power with the opposition it has already beaten. If the parties ever do reach agreement, it is questionable whether the peace will hold or, as in Afghanistan, fall apart if Russia scales back its involvement.

As in other conflicts, the passage of time and the pressures of poverty may lead to a resolution. War-ravaged Tajikistan, emerging from the Soviet Union in last place, sorely needs aid, trade, and good standing in the international community of nations. The United States and other donor countries will likely tie further assistance to a negotiated settlement, eventually forcing the government of Tajikistan to reform itself and share power. The opposition has no doubt grown weary of its long banishment in Moscow, Afghanistan, and Iran and has demonstrated its readiness to negotiate. Talks will grind on for months, perhaps years. When peace does come, the high cost of unilateral action may lead Russia to police Tajikistan under U.N. terms. Unlike Afghanistan, the Tajik civil war was fought on the territory of the former Soviet Union and Russia will probably never give Tajikistan up entirely. Instead, Russian and CIS troops will be first in line to exchange their faux-U.N. blue helmets for the real thing. ●

Notes

1. "Why All Eyes Are on a Place Called Tajikistan," *New York Times*, November 7, 1993.

2. Even when members of Islamic, nationalist, and democratic groups have been part of the government, the groups are still referred to as "the opposition." See Barnett Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," *Survival* 35 (Winter 1993/94).

3. Olivier Roy, "The Civil War in Tajikistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, Washington, DC, December 1993, p. 17.

4. Rubin, "Fragmentation of Tajikistan," p. 79.



AFRICA · AMERICAS · ASIA · HELSINKI · MIDDLE EAST

Human Rights in Tajikistan

Testimony of Holly Burkhalter, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki
before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe

Thank you for holding this important hearing, Mr. Chairman, and for inviting me to testify. My name is Holly Burkhalter, and I am the Washington Director and Advocacy Director of Human Rights Watch. I appear this morning on behalf of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki.

Hearings on countries that are so little known in the West are rare occasions, and I believe that the concerns that you are raising will have particular resonance with the Government of Tajikistan. This is an important moment in political developments and in human rights, and we are grateful for your attention to it. Human Rights Watch has been fortunate to be able to have a representative in Tajikistan for the past half year. Given the absence of a developed, indigenous human rights movement, it is difficult to collect information there. Nonetheless, our representative in Tajikistan has developed a useful network of contacts, and I think her reporting from the field will be of interest to you. What follows is a summary:

Background

The civil war in Tajikistan was triggered in March 1992 by mass demonstrations against the communist government of President Rahman Nabiev. The opposition was composed of a diverse range of movements, including democratic, nationalist, cultural revivalist and Islamist parties, and consisted primarily of people whose origins were from the Charm region (hereinafter "Charmis") and Pamir region (hereinafter "Pamiris") of Tajikistan. The government, for its part, was supported by the old guard communist elite from the Leninabad region and people from the Kulab region (hereinafter "Kulabis").

Tensions between the opposition and the government had been building since the forcible installation of Nabiev in September 1991 and the official dissolution of the Soviet Union two months later. The spring 1992 demonstrations led to armed clashes and violence. On May 7, President Nabiev and the opposition signed an agreement providing for the establishment of a coalition government. The violence between the two sides continued, however, escalating into full scale civil war by late summer. On September 7, President Nabiev was forced to resign at gunpoint.

Soon thereafter, members of the old communist elite left the coalition government and in November 1992, the opposition resigned from the coalition as well. The 16th session of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan, which closed on December 2, 1992, was intended to create a government of national reconciliation. Instead, the parliament elected a government dominated by Kulabis and the former communist party old guard, and elected Emomali Rahmonov as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. This government still rules Tajikistan today.

All parties to the conflict signed a ceasefire following the 16th session, but it has not been observed. Indeed, eighteen months later, there is still an ongoing armed struggle between the armed opposition and the Tajik national army, the latter assisted by the 201st Motorized Rifle Division of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense and border troops subordinate to the Russian Federation Ministry of Security. These forces are scheduled to remain in Tajikistan at least until January 1995.

During recent months, the situation in Tajikistan has grown increasingly tense. In addition to continuing and intensified skirmishes along the Afghan-Tajik border, a more serious wave of hostilities broke out on July 22, when over 50 members of the Tajik army were taken hostage in Tawildara, in Eastern Badakhshan, by armed members of the opposition. Since that time, a large number of Tajik forces have been sent to the region and heavy casualties have been reported. The fighting is reported to be the most serious to have taken place in Tajikistan since the civil war. On September 8, Tawildara was reportedly taken by the opposition, although the Tajik Ministry of Defense has denied these reports.¹ The Russian military has also stepped up its involvement in Tajikistan following the killing of 11 Russian border troops on the Tajik-Afghan border on August 19.

The Elections

Tajikistan is scheduled to hold elections on November 6, 1994, the first elections to be held since the end of the civil war. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki supports the transition to a democratic government in Tajikistan. However, we believe that current conditions in Tajikistan do not permit free and democratic elections. Accordingly, we urge the government to address the absence of basic civil and political rights in the country. Until political prisoners are freed, until there is greater freedom of the press, until the ban on opposition parties is lifted permitting freedom of association, until the Electoral Law is amended and arrangements are made for voting by as many refugees as possible, conditions in Tajikistan will not be

¹ "Vesti" News Program, Russian Television, September 9, 1994.

conducive to meaningful, democratic elections.

Political prisoners

On January 7, 1993, within weeks after the current government came to power, the Procuracy of Tajikistan opened a criminal case against the leaders of the various opposition parties and movements. These included the leaders of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Revival Party, Lali Badakhshan, Rastokhez, the Chairman of the Dushanbe City Executive Committee and the religious leader of Tajikistan, the Kozi Kolon Turojonzada. Many of these figures had fled the country and were, accordingly, charged in absentia.

Of those who remained in Tajikistan, a large number were detained and are still awaiting trial. These include Mirbobo Mirrahimov, the former chairman of the Tajikistan State Committee on Television and Radio, and Akhmadsho Komilov, Khairiddin Kasimov and Khurshed Nazarov, all three television journalists, whose charges include treason, attempts to violently overthrow the government, and crimes against the state. The four have been detained without trial since January 1993.

Others, such as Jumaboi Niyazev, a former regional chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and Nuriddin Sadridinnov, a former regional chairman of Rastokhez, were sentenced to seven and ten years, respectively, for "possession of bullets." Numerous members of the Islamic Revival Party, such as Ajik Aliev, Mahmadyar Nazimov and Rajab Attalaev, received sentences ranging from three years to death on charges of conspiring or calling for the overthrow of the government.

In addition to these high profile cases, it is believed that scores of others have been detained or imprisoned in Tajikistan for the legitimate exercise of their right to dissent. Exact figures are difficult to obtain as even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has continued to be denied universal access to prisoners. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has also made numerous requests to visit political prisoners but, to date, has not been accorded such permission.

The numerous amnesties issued by the government since November 1992 have had a limited scope and do not apply to people who called for the overthrow of the government, organized public disorder or other political acts. The most recent amnesty law, adopted on August 25, 1994, had been expected to apply to political prisoners and thus serve as a confidence-building measure paving the way for national reconciliation. However, as with past amnesties, the August 25 amnesty also contains exceptions for those sentenced for "particularly grave state crimes," which includes treason, "terrorist acts" and attempts to

overthrow the government.²

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki believes that these individuals have not only been detained on politically motivated charges, but that many have been denied the minimum due process guarantees provided under international law, including the right to legal counsel, the right to a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal and the right to be tried without undue delay.³ They should be accorded a fair trial in conformity with international standards or be released immediately.

Freedom of the Press

One of the greatest obstacles to free and democratic elections in Tajikistan is the absence of a free press. Following the civil war, many journalists fled Tajikistan under threats from armed supporters of the government. According to Reporters Sans Frontieres, a watchdog organization on freedom of the press, at least four journalists were killed in Tajikistan in 1993 "because of their opinions or in the carrying out of their work."⁴

Three other journalists have been killed under uncertain circumstances in 1994. Olim Abdulloev, a journalist at the Tajikistan state television and Khoshvakht Haydarsho, a journalist at the pro-government daily *Jumhuriyat* were both assassinated during the month of May. On August 18, Davlatali Rahmonov, the Director of Programming for Tajik Television and one of the most prominent commentators in the country, was killed as he was leaving his home. The next day, a hand grenade was

² Article 8 of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Amnesty," dated August 25 1994. Article I(e) of the August 25 decree does, however, extend an amnesty to those who fought "in defense of the constitutional system of the Republic" -- i.e. those who fought on the side of the current government, but were subsequently jailed for crimes committed during the conflict.

For the definition of "particularly grave state crimes" see Criminal Code of Tajikskii SSR, Articles 61-70.

³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 14.

⁴ International Freedom of Expression Exchange Clearing House Action Alert, June 2, 1994.

thrown into the home of Irmatov Suleimon, editor of the Communist Party newspaper, injuring three family members.

There is also clear evidence of government efforts to curb freedom of the press. During the week of August 8, 1994, armed forces of the Ministry of Security entered and searched, without search warrants, the homes of Makhoud Husseinov of the Supreme Soviet's newspaper *Sadai Mardom* (*Voice of the People*) and Muhammad Rahim Saidar, a writer and journalist. Copies of *Charoghi Ruz*, an independent newspaper published in Moscow, were found in both journalists' homes.

No formal charges were brought against either journalist, but they were detained for six and four days, respectively. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has received reports that both men were beaten and mistreated during detention. The sole basis for the detention of these journalists was the suspicion that they had served as local distributors of *Charoghi Ruz*. Both journalists were informed that distribution of the newspaper has been banned in Tajikistan, and were threatened with imprisonment if they continued to serve as distributors. However, although the founder and staff of *Charoghi Ruz* were driven out of the country due to threats and attacks following the civil war, no law or decree exists banning the newspaper or its distribution in Tajikistan.

Finally, as discussed above, the former chairman of the Tajikistan State Committee on Television and Radio Mirbob Mirrahimov, and the three television journalists Akhmadsho Komilov, Khairiddin Kasimov and Khurshed Nazarov have been detained since January 1993, and it is unclear when their case will go to trial.

These events have had a chilling effect on freedom of the press in Tajikistan. At present, there are six major functioning newspapers in the country; five are government newspapers, and the sixth receives almost all of its funding from the government.⁵ In addition there are various regional newspapers that are also government-run. No criticism of the government or its policies can be detected in these publications, which are either controlled by the government or engage in self-

⁵ These are: the Supreme Soviet's *Sadai Mardom*, the Council of Ministers' *Jumhuriyat*, *Narodnaya Gazeta* and *Khalgh Avazi*, and the Dushanbe Municipality's *Vyecherni Dushanbe*. *Biznes i Politika* receives most of its funding from the Ministry of Industry.

censorship.⁶

Recently, the editor and staff of *Ettehad*, a relatively recent newspaper published by the Leninabad division of the "Kenjaev⁷ Fund", alleged that, following their publication of articles critical of the leadership of the republic and the effectiveness of Supreme Soviet chairman Emomali Rahmonov, the head of the Leninabad Regional Executive Committee forbade the further publication of the newspaper in the region.⁸

Participation in the Political Process

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees every citizen the right and the opportunity "to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections ... guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors." However, the new electoral law makes no provisions for the participation of the opposition or of Tajik refugees in elections. Moreover, its nomination and eligibility requirements, which make it virtually impossible for anyone outside of current government circles to become a presidential candidate, as well as a supreme court ban on opposition parties, effectively preclude the candidacy of any member of the opposition. In order for presidential elections in Tajikistan to be meaningful, representatives of all political points of view must have the opportunity to present their candidacy. Accordingly, the government must lift the ban on opposition political parties and amend the Electoral Law. Moreover, it must seek to include as many refugees as possible in the political process. Otherwise, tens of thousands of Tajik citizens will potentially be denied their right, under international law, either to vote or to be elected in national elections.

Exclusion of the Opposition

⁶ The press problem is exacerbated by a severe economic crisis, particularly a shortage of paper and ink, which has prevented most newspapers from publishing more than one weekly or bi-weekly edition.

⁷ Safarali Kenjaev, a prominent politician and President of the Council of Ministers during the Nabiev Government, subsequently had a falling out with the current Rahmonov government.

⁸ August 30, 1994, communication addressed to the United Nations Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT), by the staff and editor of *Ettehad*.

Ban on Political Parties: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees, in Article 22, the right to freedom of association. The most striking violation of this right in Tajikistan is the failure by the government to lift the June 21, 1993, Supreme Court ban against the main opposition parties: the Islamic Revival party, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Rastokhez and Lali Badakhshan. In his speech before the 20th session, Emomali Rahmonov expressed the hope that the postponement of the elections would permit "representatives of other political organizations and forces in opposition to come back home and put forward their candidacy." In the short time remaining before the rescheduled elections, concrete steps must be taken by the government to lift the ban on opposition parties and movements and make this hope a reality.

Restrictive Nomination Procedures: The procedures in the Electoral Law for nomination of presidential candidates are restrictive. A candidate may not nominate himself; rather, nomination may only take place by one of the following entities, during the course of an official congress or conference: a registered political party, the Council of People's Deputies of the Autonomous Oblast of Gorno-Badakhshan, Regional Councils, Dushanbe City council or the Representative Assembly of Regional and City Councils.⁹

At present, only two political parties are registered in Tajikistan: the Communist Party and the Party of Economic and Political Renewal. If someone who is not a member of or supported by one of these two parties wishes to run for president of Tajikistan, they would first have to form a new political party for the purpose of nominating them as a presidential candidate. To this end, the following procedures would have to be followed: the founders of the political party would first have to convene a meeting and draft regulations, and then register their regulations with the appropriate governmental body (e.g. Ministry of Justice, Department of Justice of Regional Executive Committee, etc.) The application for registration would be considered within one month of receipt and, if approved, the party could start functioning as of that date.¹⁰ However, a political party may be required to resubmit or amend its registration, for technical reasons. In addition, registration may be refused under certain circumstances, for example if the party aims to overthrow the government. A decision to deny registration would have to be appealed to the Supreme Soviet of

⁹ Electoral Law, Article 24.

¹⁰ Law of the Tajik Socialist Republic on Public Associations (organizations) in the Tajik SSR, Article 12.

the Republic of Tajikistan, which is a lengthy process.¹¹

Restrictive Eligibility Requirements: Article 1 of the Electoral Law requires that a presidential candidate has resided permanently in Tajikistan for the last ten years. This requirement renders members of the opposition who have lived in exile since the end of the civil war ineligible. According to the Deputy Minister of Justice, this provision does not, in fact, exclude the opposition, because there is an "unwritten understanding" by the government that an exception will be made for members of the opposition, if necessary.¹² However, the absence of such an understanding in written form, coupled with the ban on opposition parties and the outstanding criminal charges against prominent members of the opposition, make the candidacy of a member of the opposition highly improbable.

Exclusion of Refugees: Another major flaw in the Electoral Law is the absence of any provisions for the participation of refugees in elections. Following the civil war, hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into northern Afghanistan, Russia and other countries of the CIS. An exact figure for the number of Tajik refugees is difficult to obtain, as no accurate "census" or registration process has taken place for the refugee population as a whole.

The Electoral Law does not even mention the issue of refugee voting, although Article 2 states that any citizen of Tajikistan over the age of 18 has the right to vote in presidential elections. This article excludes those who are physically incapable of voting, which would presumably apply to persons located outside of the country during elections. Article 30 does provide alternative voting arrangements for eligible voters who are unable to attend the polling station on election day, but these arrangements require that the voter be physically present in Tajikistan prior to election day on the day of the election.

Unless an effective means is provided for the participation of refugees in the elections, a significant percentage of the citizens of Tajikistan will be effectively barred from taking part in the election. According to officials, the government plans to provide for voting by those refugees currently living in UNHCR-administered camps in Afghanistan, but no further details

¹¹ *id.*, Article 13.

¹² Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Khalifbobo Hamidov, First Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, on August 8, 1994.

have been made available.¹³ By the end of August, only 5,000 - 6,000 refugees were registered in UNHCR-administered camps in Afghanistan, and the UNHCR estimates the actual number of refugees present there to be as low as 3,000 - 4,000.¹⁴ Thus, even if carried out, this plan would address a limited portion of the refugee population, while failing to take into account the tens or possibly hundreds of thousands of Tajik refugees living in other regions of Afghanistan, Russia, and the rest of the CIS.

Recommendations:

To the Government of Tajikistan:

- (1) Lift the ban on opposition political parties;
- (2) Amend the Electoral Law to eliminate restrictive eligibility and nomination procedures;
- (3) Stop the harassment of journalists and censorship of the press;
- (4) Drop criminal charges against opposition leaders who were engaged in the legitimate exercise of their right to dissent. This would permit these individuals to return to Tajikistan and participate in the political process, if they so desire, without fear of prosecution;
- (5) Work with the Joint Refugee Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for speedy completion of the refugee repatriation process prior to elections, or provide specific measures for the participation of as many refugees as possible in future elections;
- (6) Issue a new amnesty law which would apply to persons engaged in the legitimate and peaceful exercise of their right to dissent, and release all such political prisoners; and
- (7) Allow the International Committee of the Red Cross and responsible human rights organizations such as HRW/Helsinki access to the prisons.

To the Governments of the United States and the member states of

¹³ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Khalifbobo Hamidov, First Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, on August 8, 1994.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with UNHCR officer in Dushanbe, September 5, 1994. The discrepancy between the number of registered refugees and the actual number of refugees present in the camps is due to an inflation in number of family members reported by each refugee family.

the European Union:

Condition future technical and economic assistance to the government of Tajikistan on the fulfillment of the above conditions.

To the Government of Russia:

Condition future military, technical and economic assistance to the government of Tajikistan on the fulfillment of the above conditions.

**STATEMENT OF L. K. KAYUMOV
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

SEPTEMBER 22, 1994

Ladies and Gentlemen:

For me it is a great honor to address you as a representative of sovereign Tajikistan. We are an ancient nation. The native language of the Tajiks was formed back in the VII-IX centuries B.C. A very rich classical literature has been written in our language. Tajikistan is a multinational state. My homeland is a country of unique natural resources.

Tajikistan acquired independence in 1991.

It would seem that we had all the prerequisites for the steady development of the Republic, and to guarantee our citizens a peaceful and prosperous life. However, in May 1992, the country was plunged into a terrible fratricidal war. The Tajik conflict has brought my people unprecedented suffering and enormous economic loss. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, and the number of refugees and displaced persons has exceeded 900,000 people.

A factor seriously complicating the situation in the Republic has been the armed clashes on the Tajik-Afghan border, which we view as the external border with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The situation has developed in a direction that seriously threatens the peace and security of the entire Central Asian region. Under these circumstances, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan have signed an agreement to establish, on the territory of my country, collective peace-keeping forces from the CIS countries. The actions undertaken by these five governments are fully in compliance with the statutes of the Treaty on Collective Security of the CIS, and with the terms of bilateral agreements with Tajikistan. They are in keeping with the well-known resolutions of the U.N. Security Council and also the steps taken by the U.N. General Secretary to support the stabilization of the situation in Tajikistan. In that connection, I would like to call on the respected members of the U.S. Congress to take a positive position regarding the publicized proposal of granting the collective peace-keeping forces of the CIS countries deployed in Tajikistan the status of a peace-keeping operation under the aegis of the U.N.

In April of this year, with active conflict resolution efforts by the U.N., Russia, the U.S. and a number of other interested states, inter-Tajik negotiations began in Moscow. The second round took place in Teheran. And I am deeply pleased to state that the first practical results have been obtained on the path of dialogue among differing political factions: on September 17, an agreement was signed on a temporary cease-fire and the cessation of other hostile actions on the Tajik-Afghan border and inside the country during the period of the negotiations.

We are now faced with an incredibly difficult task: to create the foundations for Tajik statehood. This can be done only through implementing a comprehensive program of political and socio-economic reforms and forming a strong central government on the basis of the rule of law and order.

Finally, Tajikistan is the poorest of all the republics of the former Soviet Union. We have appealed to the U.N. with a reasoned initiative to grant Tajikistan the status of a least-developed country. Allow me to express the hope that in reviewing this matter at the U.N., the U.S. will support the request of the Tajik representatives.

Thank you for your attention.



American Red Cross

National Headquarters
Washington, DC 20006

TAJIKISTAN

SITUATION REPORT No. 7

22 SEPTEMBER 1994

Introduction:

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has responded to the conflict in Tajikistan with emergency humanitarian and development assistance. Mandated by the Geneva Conventions to provide assistance and protection to victims of war, the Red Cross is in many cases the only organization that can operate successfully in conflict zones. Committed to the Fundamental Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality, the Red Cross provides assistance to all victims of war, irrespective of race, politics, religion or other beliefs and affiliations.

Overview:

In the early spring of 1992, opponents of Tajik President Rakhmon Nabiev, an unreformed communist, organized large demonstrations in the capital city of Dushanbe and demanded the President's resignation. Over the next two months, counterdemonstrations by pro-government forces led repeatedly to violent confrontations. In late May, Nabiev proposed a "Government of National Reconciliation," in which the anti-communist opposition received one third of the seats in the Cabinet of Ministers. This new coalition government was rejected by traditional government supporters in the Khudzhand and Kulyab regions, many of whom saw a challenge to their dominance. Nabiev's supporters in Khudzhand, many of whom are ethnic Uzbeks, felt betrayed by the president and threatened to make the *oblast'* part of neighboring Uzbekistan. In the south, fighting broke out between Nabiev's supporters in the Kulyab *oblast'* and his opponents in the neighboring Kurgan-Tyube *oblast'*, controlled by parties of the Tajik opposition. On 7 September, President Nabiev was forced to resign, transferring power to the Supreme Soviet Presidium and the Council of Ministers.

Opposition forces, known as *Garmusy* because of their base in the Garm Valley to the east of Dushanbe, held the upper hand from May through November 1992, and actually seized the capital of Dushanbe in September. In November, Imam Ali Rahkmonov (a supporter of Nabiev) led the return of the old guard in a parliamentary coup aided by the Popular Front, a paramilitary organization. In December, the Popular Front, backed by the Uzbek Military, retook Dushanbe and began to reestablish government control over the republic. The opposition

coalition—the Islamic Renaissance Party, the Western-oriented Democratic Party, the Tajik nationalist *Rastokhez* (Rebirth) Movement and the *Lali Badakhshan* (Ruby of Badakhshan) independence movement—went on the defensive.

Like elsewhere in the post-socialist world, the collapse of centralized social control mechanisms has allowed old feuds to reemerge. In Tajikistan—where Tajiks make up 62.3% of the population, followed by Uzbeks (23.5%) and Russians (7.6%)—the fighting has involved primarily regional—rather than ethnic—disputes, as well as larger political ones. Because political loyalties remain linked to regional ones, the situation remains unstable, with little evidence to suggest a political reconciliation in the near future.

Events in Tajikistan continue to be tense. Radio Rossi reported on 17 June 1994 that approximately 2,000 people, overwhelmingly Russians, are leaving Tajikistan each month. Before the civil war there were some 600,000 Russians living in the country; now only an estimated 80,000 remain, which may or may not include the more than 20,000 Russian servicemen who guard Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. This exodus has drained from Tajikistan much of the elite which governed the country prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Attacks on Russian border guards in late May and early June 1994 left seven dead in ten days. Russian officials reacted with growing anger, and Russia's ambassador lodged a formal note of protest with President Rakhmonov, demanding action. Anatoly Chechulin, commander of Russian border guards, announced increased border patrols and blamed the Tajik Islamic opposition leader Akbar Turadzhonzoda. Russian Deputy Defense

Rakhmonov, the Opposition, and the Presidential Election

At the closing of the eighteenth session of the Supreme Soviet, President Imomali Rakhmonov hinted that parliamentary and presidential elections would ultimately be held, along with a referendum on a new constitution. In the months that followed, a draft constitution was prepared, and candidates were allowed to register for elections, scheduled for the 25th of September.

Since that time, however, political power appears to have devolved to regional bases held by local leaders of the Popular Front. Indeed, most opposition leaders threatened to boycott the elections altogether—opposition leader Akbar Turadzhonzoda told Interfax that the opposition considered the elections illegal. In response, the government pushed forward with plans for the election, effectively ignoring the demands of the opposition and stating that a single candidate election could still be democratic. As a consequence, opposition forces stepped up attacks on both Tajik and Russian border defense units.

Bowing to heavy foreign pressure—from Russia in particular—the Tajik government agreed on 7 September to postpone both the election and the constitutional referendum until 6 November. The official explanation for the delay was the start of the harvest campaign and the incomplete nature of the return of Tajik refugees.

Although, according to *Pravda*, the postponement of the presidential elections and the constitutional referendum "is the first significant political concession to the opposition," the situation in Tajikistan does not appear to have improved since the announcement. An official of Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense told Interfax on 10 September that Tajik opposition units had captured the town of Tavil-Dara east of Dushanbe the previous day, blocking a main road from the capital to the southern and eastern parts of the country. Government troops are reported to have sustained substantial losses. The opposition, evidently buoyed by government concessions, appears energized and on the offensive.

Russian Deputy Defense

Minister Georgii Kondratev also blamed the Islamic opposition, claiming that these attacks foreshadowed a renewed offensive in the region. Abdullah Nuri, head of the Islamic government in exile, denied responsibility for the attacks and demanded that Russia be more neutral if it wished to retain legitimacy as a mediator in the Tajik conflict. Shortly thereafter, Reuters reported that Russian troops had shelled rebel bases inside Afghanistan after suffering rocket attacks from across the border. The Tajik Defence Ministry announced that it had carried out a raid on a rebel base in Garm, killing 16 people (12 of them allegedly rebel fighters) and seizing large amounts of weaponry. However, the Munich-based Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute (RFE/RL) notes that there was no confirmation that those killed were indeed rebels, and that "in the past, the Tajik government has been accused to killing civilians as reprisals for rebel attacks, and subsequently claiming that the civilians were opposition fighters."

Supported by Russia, Iran and Pakistan, as well as the UN, peace talks to build a cease-fire were held in Tehran on 18 June, but ended on 27 June without an agreement. The two sides, however, issued a joint communique which loosely supported the idea of a cease-fire and of national reconciliation. The Tajik government also agreed to prepare for a release of political prisoners and amnesty for opposition leaders, key demands of the opposition. In an apparently conciliatory gesture, the Tajik government sent twenty truck-loads of food to the capital of Gorno-Badakhshan; opposition forces objected to the CIS military escort which accompanied the food and warned that Russian armored troop carriers should stay out of the region. Both sides are now guardedly optimistic about the up-coming peace talks in Islamabad, Pakistan although there has been little concrete progress towards peace and ethnic tensions continue to simmer, particularly in the Khatlon oblast where Uzbeks and Kulyabis fought in February.

A series of emergency measures have been introduced in Dushanbe and the six districts around it. The nightly curfew continues in Dushanbe, and a network of check-points and personal controls have been established throughout most of the country. This does not prevent the many killings which take place even in Dushanbe nearly every night. In addition to an unstable political situation, food shortages continue, the absence of soap has made disease endemic, and no medicaments are available.

The Economic Impact:

Under Soviet rule, Tajikistan was the poorest and most underdeveloped of the Union's fifteen constituent republics. Its population of 5.3 million worked primarily in agriculture and other rural forms of employment. Family sizes were generally quite large and fertility rates among the highest in the USSR. Overall demographic statistics published by the World Bank and UNDP show a population of nearly 13 million by 2025.

Prior to the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991, agriculture was the primary component of the economy, traditionally producing some 65 percent of republican GNP and employing 40 per cent of the population. Cotton was the most important crop, accounting for an estimated 40 per cent of total agricultural output. With virtually no industrial base and very little to offer the

The Collapse of the Tajik Economy

Dushanbe—On the streets and squares of Dushanbe, city dwellers of pre-pension and pension age are doing a brisk trade in things which, a few years ago, they would not even have bothered dragging to the city garbage dump. As you pass along the interminable "flea market style" rows, you can pick up wobbly stools, watches without hands or a mechanism, locks without keys, keys without teeth, post-war vehicle handbooks, and much, much more.

Nor do the street traders have a profit on their minds. The matter is one of a means of survival. One-third of the population of the capital, and indeed, that of other republic cities, support themselves in precisely this way. These people comprise mainly pensioners, invalids, and large families...

For several straight months already, Tajikistan's population has not received wages or pensions. For many people other social payments are a forgotten memory. Mass strikes are not in evidence as yet, insofar as civil disturbances of any kind are "not provided for" by the state of emergency existing in the republic. Nevertheless, Tajikistan is moving inexorably toward the brink beyond which a huge social explosion may follow. The main reason for the emerging crisis, according to claims by economists, is Tajikistan's delayed entry into the ruble zone. Of the R120 billion in financial credit offered by Russia, all that remains in point of fact are financial liabilities, and major ones at that. Top functionaries of the Tajikistan Government have recently been commuting tirelessly to Moscow, persistently trying to get new credits for the republic...

Major Tajik financiers believe that the state's domestic debts to the population comprise an astronomical figure, at a time when the fate of the single ruble zone is becoming increasingly uncertain. Moreover, they assert, the republic is living according to the "spend, spend, spend" principle, vaguely alluding to uncontrolled frittering of monetary credits received by structures of the National Bank. It is known that National Bank Chairman K. Kavmiddinov was unable to account to deputies at the last session of the Tajik parliament for R100 billion which had mysteriously disappeared.

Excerpted from Alisher Niyazov, "We Will Sell Watches Without Hands or a Mechanism..."—Tajikistan's Economy Has Acquired All the Hallmarks of One Huge and Not Entirely Clean Flea Market," *Pravda*, 31 August 1994.

world market, Tajikistan has been devastated by the collapse of inter-republican trade. Prior to the eruption of hostilities in the south, many Tajiks were able to make due by bartering or obtaining food from family members in rural areas, and some assessments suggested the republic could become self-sufficient in food production. The civil war has destroyed those hopes, at least for the present. The general economy remains shattered. The combination of rising prices and a breakdown in trade and production has created a shortage of even the most basic commodities. The banking system has collapsed, there is an acute shortage of rubles, and salaries have not been paid for the last three to six months. As a result, the general nutrition situation has deteriorated. The mountainous eastern regions of Garm and Pamir, "the poorest areas of the poorest republic" according to *The New York Times*, are now even more vulnerable than before.

Prior to the conflict, the social welfare system faced an enormous budget crisis. The civil war has severely exacerbated many of the economic shocks common throughout the former Soviet Union, fueling an economic depression that has seen significant erosion of both purchasing power and real living standards. In its

consolidated appeal for Tajikistan issued in April 1994, the United Nations identifies a target population of 655,000 beneficiaries. This figure includes 30,000 refugees expected to return from Afghanistan; 20,000 internally displaced persons in Gorno-Badakhshan and expected to

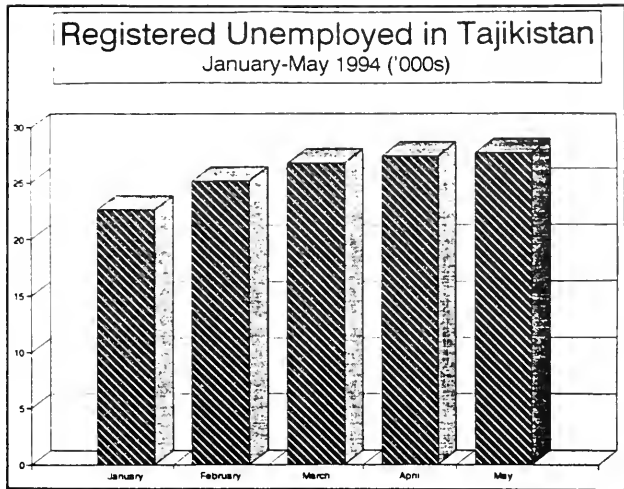
return to the Khatlon province; and 500,000 returnees and vulnerable persons in the Khatlon province. A Federation Team investigated the health and humanitarian situation in Tajikistan in May and June of 1994. Its findings are detailed below.

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have left the Ruble Zone to introduce their own currencies, and Tajikistan is the only

republic in the former Soviet Union besides the Russian Federation to remain within the Ruble Zone. This development has produced a highly inflationary influx of old Soviet and Russian rubles into Tajikistan, further eroding the republic's already tenuous financial base.

Economic figures for CIS member countries published in *Delovoy Mir* in September show severe economic hardship in Tajikistan. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the first six months of 1994 fell 12 per cent compared with the first half of 1993. Industrial production fell 40 per cent. The consumer price index increased nearly ten times from January to June, and the growth of prices continued to outstrip growth in the monetary income of the population. Food production during the first half fell to just 66 per cent of the level recorded a year earlier. Alarming, despite continued inflation and production declines, the amount of the minimal pension in Tajikistan did not increase, translating into reduced purchasing power among the most vulnerable. The number of registered unemployed persons has increased each month in 1994, and total unemployment (registered and unregistered) reached 148,100 in May. Only 21.6 per cent of the unemployed reporting receiving any benefits. Overall, purchasing power among the vulnerable appears to have decreased during the first half of 1994.¹

The American Red Cross is concerned that additional civil unrest and continued economic decay could once again spark a violent conflict in Tajikistan, resulting in additional population migrations and substantially increasing the levels of need across the country. Tajikistan's



¹ Information contained in this section is drawn from data prepared by the CIS Statistical Committee (CNG Statkomitet) and published in *Delovoy Mir*, 15-22 August 1994, pp.14-16.

population is already among the most vulnerable in the former USSR.

Food and Agriculture:

Severe floods and landslides in May 1994, which caused substantial damage to the infrastructure north of Dushanbe, combined with shortages in fuel and yield-enhancing inputs led to a harvest well below target. The floods exacerbated the effects of the civil strife which has brought the economy to the verge of total collapse.

Both the Government of Tajikistan and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN estimate the total food import requirement in 1994 at 900,000 metric tons. The country produced only 200,000 MT, and succeeded in importing 650,00 MT, very little of which reached the poorest sectors of the country and, in particular, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast'. The continued provision of food aid in the form of supplementary rations (over and above the Government bread ration), consisting of cereals (150g/person/day), cooking oil (15g/person/day) and sugar (10g/person/day) for a target group of 655,000 persons is considered essential. Emergency food assistance is of particular importance to displaced persons, returnees and other civilians whose livelihoods have been lost due to the conflict and the economic collapse.

Collection, marketing and distribution of produce was hampered by the lack of fuel as was the actual harvesting of crops. Hyper-inflation in 1993 spiraled to some 2,000 per cent, as old rubles flowed into the country from neighboring countries which introduced their own currencies. Although some private markets have remained open in Dushanbe, their selection was modest and their prices out of reach of most city dwellers.

Food access, not availability, remains the biggest concern. There are frequent protest against high prices and scarcity. Children have been especially hard-hit: public health authorities in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast reported that last winter children had passed out both on their way to school and in classrooms. The primary cause was malnutrition, but also included anemia and infections. The World Food Program is planning supplementary feeding programs for schoolchildren, pregnant women and TB patients. The program would be administered by teachers and the Tajik Red Crescent Society (TRCS).

The food security of the vulnerable populations, particularly war-affected populations such as returnees and internally displaced, continues to be at risk. Decline in internal conflict has prompted many refugees and internally displaced to return to their homes. However, most of returnees were not able to plant garden plots, have no food stocks or fuel and have very limited financial resources for purchasing these essentials during the winter. As garden plots play a crucial role in household food security, the situation for returnees is particularly severe.

Assessments by the Aga Khan Foundation and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies targeting the Gorno-Badakhshan region in the east revealed a substantial need for food, particularly rice and cereals. Sugar and cooking oil deliveries are well behind schedule, exacerbating shortages throughout the region. Although the Tajik Ministry of

Agriculture remains optimistic that disagreements with Tajikistan's trading partners can be resolved, the republic has run out of cash and barter goods, and most of its trade agreements will have to be renegotiated. Moreover, government resources have tended to be directed westward, largely at the expense of those living in the Pamirs.

Public Health and the Medical Sector:

When contrasted with most OECD countries, the Soviet Union had one of the largest public health care sectors in the world, with 42.3 physicians for every 10,000 people. Tajikistan, however, managed only 25.5. Furthermore, because the sector as a whole has traditionally been undertrained and underpaid, the quality of care available in Tajikistan was generally quite low. This is reflected in the high rates of mortality for both infants and mothers, as well as a comparatively low life expectancy.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent disruption of trade links between the former USSR and its East European suppliers, as well as the collapse of inter-republican trade, have conspired to produce a major crisis in health care throughout the former Soviet Union. The critical needs list for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for the former union republics are the items previously purchased from East European manufacturers and no longer available, except for hard currency at world market prices. Authorities from the Ministry of Health have lamented openly that Tajikistan is a "nation of raw materials...We have no pharmaceutical industry or manufacturers of medical equipment and supplies."

The health and sanitation crises have resulted in rapidly increasing morbidity rates. In 1990, the infant mortality rate was approximately 40.4 per 1,000 live births. In 1992 this rate rose to 48.9, and in 1993 was around 55 but as high as 65-75 per 1,000 in more remote oblasty. For comparison, the rate in Russia is 19 per 1,000 live births and in Western Europe 10 per 1,000. In many regions, maternal mortality is exceptionally high, reaching in some cases nearly 120 per 100,000 live births--as opposed to 8-10 per 100,000 in the United States and Western Europe. Among children under 15 years of age, the leading cause of illness and death are acute respiratory infections (ARI) and diarrheal diseases. ARI alone accounted for 40 per cent of all deaths in this age group, and diarrhea accounted for perhaps as much as 25 per cent. Poor sanitation and hygiene (see below) contribute to incidences of these diseases. Children and pregnant women have been particularly vulnerable to the decline in health care.

In addition, many areas in the south have been particularly affected by the 1992 conflict. Health care facilities in Kumsangir, for example, were wholly or partially destroyed. More than 1,000 ambulances and over 25 billion rubles of hospital buildings were destroyed. These have been neither repaired nor replaced. Casualties from the fighting have placed additional strains on hospitals and clinics already critically short of supplies. The Federation reports that the country

The recent Red Cross assessment of Tajikistan revealed that the public health sector has been devastated by both the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent civil war. According to Dr Alamkhon Akhmedov, Minister of Public Health, all statistics show a deteriorating situation. the

whole country is in urgent need of most drugs, and has no anesthetics, antibiotics, hormones, analgesics or anti-inflammatory agents, anti-diabetic drugs including insulin, TB drugs, sulpha drugs, anti-malaria agents and most types of basic medical supplies including medical cotton. The Ministry of Health has no money to purchase any of these materials and there is no pharmaceutical industry in the country.

The surgical situation is desperate. Without anesthetics, blood transfusion, blood, intravenous solutions or disinfectants, nearly all surgical activities have been suspended. The absence of films and developing materials has closed x-ray facilities; laboratories have also had to close. Only emergency operations are possible, although performed without anaesthesia.

The situation in hospitals has deteriorated substantially, with facilities outside major urban areas particularly hard hit. The Red Cross assessment mission visited a variety of hospitals in Tajikistan, all of which report severe shortages of supplies and difficulties treating even the most basic complaints. The findings of the assessment team are summarized as follows:

Children's Hospitals and Wards: In the children's wards at both the *rayon* and *oblast'* level in western Tajikistan, morbidity data were essentially the same: acute respiratory infections (ARI), 70-90 per cent; diarrheal diseases, 10-20 per cent; and allergic and skin diseases, around 5 per cent each. Several cases of anemia were reported as well. In the GBAO, *Medecins sans Frontières*, has supplied sufficient pharmaceuticals to meet basic needs.

Maternity Hospitals and Wards: In West Tajikistan, all types of drugs were unavailable, although in the bigger cities supplies sufficient to meet 10 to 20 per cent of needs have been donated by Project Hope and other NGOs. Oxytocin, methylethylmercurin, antibiotics, anaesthetics and suture material are particularly badly needed. The assessment team was informed that in many cases mothers bled to death immediately after delivery due to an absence of drugs with which to induce postnatal uterine contraction. Iron deficiency anemia was reported among 75 per cent of pregnant women. Once again, MSF has covered most drug needs in these hospitals.

Psycho-Neurological Hospitals: Schizophrenia was the primary diagnosis and varied from 35 to 80 per cent of the total admissions among the hospitals visited. Other conditions prominent among the patients were epilepsy, oligophrenia and post traumatic stress disorder. Because all drugs necessary for the treatment of mental and neurological disorders had to be imported from outside the USSR, drug coverage in mental and neurological hospitals has fallen to zero per cent. Moreover, the absence of any drugs is manifest in both western Tajikistan and the GBAO.

Rayon-level General Hospitals: In western Tajikistan, the overall drug coverage is estimated at nearly zero per cent in rural areas and only between 10 and 15 per cent in urban areas. Requests for medical supplies were the same in both large and small facilities: all types of essential drugs and medical supplies are required. In western

Tajikistan the following supplies were in particularly acute demand:

- Anaesthetics, suture material, infusions sets and antibiotics for surgical wards;
- Oxytycin, ergometrin, antibiotics, hormones and family planning kits for the maternity wards;
- Aspirin, paracetamol, antibiotics, oral rehydration salts and infant formula for the pediatric wards;
- Cardio-vascular drugs, antibiotics, antiparasitic drugs, hormones, anti-diabetic tablets and disposable supplies for the general medical and therapeutic wards; and
- Soap, washing powder and disinfectants for every hospital.

Drugs and medical supplies are not urgently required in GBAO, with the exception of drugs and disposable syringes for the mental and neurological hospital, x-ray film, frames and development chemicals for the *oblast'* general hospital, and family planning sets for maternity wards.

In general, the public health system in Tajikistan borders on the non-operational. Hospitals have neither drugs nor medical supplies, and very often have little access to electricity or water. Food, soap and washing powder are also in acute demand. *Given that no major improvements in the sector are likely in the near- to medium-term, it is essential that basic medical supplies and pharmaceuticals are supplied to hospitals in Tajikistan, particularly in the western oblasty.*

Sanitation and Nutrition:

The recent Red Cross assessment of Tajikistan revealed that sanitary conditions are abysmal, producing a growing threat to public health. There exists a critical shortage of soap and washing powder in Tajikistan which has led to a growing problem with lice. Such medical operations as have been possible have been carried out under extremely dangerous sanitary conditions. This shortage has also created a public health crisis: skin diseases and diarrhea have increased markedly over the past year.

Iron deficiency is common among pregnant women (60-75 per cent of pregnant women throughout the country) and endemic goiter is reported in the mountainous regions. Malaria is spreading due to refugees and displaced people returning from Afghanistan and last summer there was an outbreak of cholera in Afghan border areas.

A complete absence of fuel for transport of any kind has made it impossible to import food into the region. Meat is rarely available and at too exorbitant a price for average citizens to afford. A lack of milk powder and infant formula, combined with breastfeeding rates of less than 50 per cent, poses a significant threat of protein deficiencies among infants. In the Gorno-Badakhshan region, the entire population, but particularly children, are considered "at risk" because of the already insufficient food supply. Malnutrition among poor pregnant women and widows with many children (mainly former refugees and displaced) is likely to increase over the coming winter. Heating fuel and coal is also scarce, and may force hospitals to close as the temperature

falls to between -30°C and -55°C in the harsh Pamir winter. Last winter, the Federation and the American Red Cross, supported by funding from USAID, were able to provide coal to hospitals and schools in the Pamirs. During the coming winter, additional heating fuel is urgently needed.

A comprehensive nutritional survey undertaken by CARE during the summer of 1994 found evidence of mild malnutrition that could deteriorate rapidly without intervention. Although the survey results do not suggest a current famine situation, according to CARE, "they do imply that the population, which has a very low margin of [nutritional] reserve because of its socioeconomic status, is unlikely to be able to withstand any significant deterioration of food availability. Therefore it is essential to initiate feasible and appropriate measures that can help avoid a crisis."

The CARE survey results suggest that although a major nutritional disaster has not yet manifested itself, without substantial efforts to improve the situation of the most vulnerable, those marginalized by the economic collapse brought on by the war will be at risk of starvation.

Displaced Persons and Refugees:

Because political loyalties in Tajikistan tend to follow regional ones, the eruption of armed conflict resulted in a massive internal flow of displaced persons from one region to another, as well as an exodus of refugees into neighboring Afghanistan. Supporters of the *Garmusy* living in Khudzhand, for example, fled to Kurgan-Tyube, relying on the resources and good will of family members and friends for support. Similarly, supporters of the government living in Kurgan-Tyube were forced to flee to neighboring Kulyab.

The reassertion of government authority throughout the country led to an official declaration in mid-March 1993 that all displaced persons living in Dushanbe and the Garm Valley would be forced to return to their homes in the southwest. The return of large numbers of displaced persons has subsequently created problems between the returnees and those who had remained in the area. Many refugees in Afghanistan fear to return to their homes in Tajikistan, and choose instead to remain in camps south of the border. The UNHCR estimates that 10,000 refugees remain in camps in Afghanistan and that several thousand Tajiks have joined opposition formations based in Afghanistan. Approximately 3,200 refugees remain in Kyrgyzstan and are likely to remain there for the time being.

In an environment characterized by both severe economic decay and long-simmering regional conflicts, the resources required to provide for internally displaced persons are in increasingly short supply. Moreover, the unfortunate spiral resulting from declining resources and open hostilities serves to exacerbate the political climate, producing additional displaced persons. All of these phenomena impede political solutions to the conflict in the short-term.

The Federation, as well as Refugees International and the UN, reports that roughly 20,000 displaced persons require assistance in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Republic. Although

the majority of these are living with relatives, nearly 5,000 remain in various public institutions. Heat continues to be a critical concern this winter.

The US government has pledged \$2.85 million to accelerate repatriation of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan. At the end of August, UNHCR told Interfax that 10,000 registered refugees remain in these camps, although the true number may be somewhat higher. Government and opposition officials have repeatedly asked for assistance as the situation of the refugees both in Afghanistan and of the displaced people in Gorno-Badakhshan is precarious. The US Government assistance will be delivered through the UNHCR, which will organize repatriations of those refugees who wish to return.

The Red Cross Response:

The International Red Cross Movement is at all times expected to be ready to provide protection and assistance to refugees and displaced persons, either by virtue of their status as protected under the Geneva Conventions or in conformity with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality). The Red Cross is also responsible for ensuring that the Geneva Conventions are recognized and upheld.

On 12 January 1993, the Republic of Tajikistan deposited with the Swiss Government a declaration of succession to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. The Government is now obligated to observe the legal statutes contained in the Conventions, particularly with reference to victims of armed conflict and the conduct of hostilities. Yet according to the *New York Times*, the ICRC has sought access to prisoners under the Geneva Conventions but has been told that it may only do so after the prisoners have been tried. Tajik law, however, allows the State to detain individuals for up to eighteen months prior to trial.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

With the outbreak of hostilities in Tajikistan, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began providing assistance in areas directly affected by the conflict. Mandated by the

International Humanitarian Law and Protection of Refugees

Civilians affected by the existence of hostilities—irrespective of whether the armed conflict is international or domestic—are protected by international humanitarian law. This protection does not require legal recognition of any specific status. Protection accrues to all victims of hostilities. The Movement, for example, provides protection to those not covered by the refugee definition of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

Violations of international humanitarian law are frequently the cause of massive population migrations, and, at the same time, reflect deliberate policies on the part of the warring parties to foment such movements. Article 3, common to the Geneva Conventions, stipulates that persons taking no active part in the hostilities shall in all circumstances be treated humanely. Moreover, the same article forbids parties to a conflict to have recourse to discriminatory treatment founded, "on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria."

The Basic Rules

The points briefly summarize the basic rules of international humanitarian law that offer protection during armed combat and which are enshrined in the Geneva Conventions:

- Combatants who are *hors de combat* (out of the fight) and those not taking part in hostilities are entitled to respect for their lives and physical and moral integrity. They are to be protected and treated humanely, without adverse discrimination.
- It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders or who is *hors de combat*.
- The wounded and sick are to be collected and cared for by the party that has them in its power. Medical personnel, establishments, transports, and materials are to be protected. The protective emblems of the Red Cross and Red Crescent must be respected.
- The lives, dignity, personal rights and religious convictions of captured combatants and civilian internees must be respected, which includes their protection against violence and reprisals. They have the right to correspond with their families and to receive humanitarian assistance.
- Those protected by the law are entitled to fundamental judicial guarantees. No one will be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment, or cruel and degrading treatment.
- Civilians are not to be objects of attack.

Geneva Conventions to protect victims of war, the ICRC provided food and medical supplies, rehabilitated water and sanitation systems, and worked with combatants to increase awareness of the Geneva Conventions and their impact on the conduct of hostilities. The ICRC continues to visit prisoners of war and other detainees to ensure that their conditions meet minimum standards. Tajik authorities, however, have in numerous cases denied the ICRC access to prisons and detention centers, a violation of the Geneva Conventions.

As the conflict has waned, ICRC relief operations have been curtailed. Current ICRC activities are focused on the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions and visits to detainees and prisoners of war.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation)

In May and June of 1994, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation) conducted an emergency assessment of the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan. Based on the findings of this Red Cross mission, the Federation issued an Emergency Appeal (11/1994) on behalf of the vulnerable population in Tajikistan. Issued on 19 August, the Appeal seeks CHF 5,765,000 (\$4,493,375) in cash, kind and services. The Appeal is divided into two components: western Tajikistan and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast'.

Western Tajikistan:

- The Appeal seeks to respond to the alarming deterioration in public health through the provision of anaesthetics, blood transfusion equipment, essential drugs, basic medicaments and disinfectants. Based on the assessment findings, the Federation proposes to deliver kits of medical supplies to children's hospitals, maternity hospitals,

rayon-level general hospitals and mental and neurological hospitals. In addition, 5 400g pieces of soap will be provided per bed in every hospital.

- The Federation is also concerned about the nutritional wellbeing of pregnant women, internally displaced persons and returnees from the GBAO. ECHO has agreed to provide 2,000 MT of wheat flour, 350 MT of oil and 150 MT of sugar to provide nutritional supplements to these vulnerable groups. In addition, the American Red Cross has applied for additional commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture with which to support this program in 1995.

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast':

- The Federation has identified just under 49,460 schoolchildren at risk of severe malnutrition and subsequently proposes to provide each student with one high energy/high protein meal each day for the duration of the school year (225 days). Bulk food will be distributed to the schools by the Tajik Red Crescent. Each meal will consist of 410 calories and 15 grams of protein.
- Because authorities in the GBAO have indicated that fuel for heating institutions, apartment buildings and homes is their first priority for the coming winter, the Federation plans to continue last winter's coal delivery program. The Federation proposes to deliver 6,500 MT of coal from mines in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
- Due to the conflict, most children in the GBAO have not received any new clothing for over two years. The Federation has subsequently requested \$60,000 worth of used clothing for children, to be distributed through schools, in conjunction with the Tajik Red Crescent. The American Red Cross has procured the necessary clothing and will transport it to Tajikistan this fall.
- Based on the findings of the medical assessment, the Federation proposes to provide supplementary equipment and supplies to some hospitals in the GBAO. Although MSF has covered the majority of pharmaceutical needs in the region, there remains an unmet need for supplies and drugs in mental and neurological hospitals. In addition, x-ray films and developing chemicals are required in the *oblast'* general hospital, particularly to test for tuberculosis.

The Federation currently maintains a regional operations base in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Regional subdelegations are operational in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and in both Bishkek and Osh in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The American Red Cross (ARC)

The American Red Cross was among the very first U.S. organizations to call attention to the situation in Tajikistan. Active in Central Asia since early 1992, the American Red Cross has

contributed over \$22 million in relief and development assistance to the region.

Last year, in response to a previous Appeal issued by the Federation, the ARC obtained \$175,000 from USAID, using it to purchase 5,200 family parcels for distribution to displaced persons living in institutions. The remaining sum of \$64,149.35 was credited toward the 1993 Federation Appeal and used to purchase coal.

The American Red Cross is currently implementing an institutional development program designed to strengthen the financial stability and organizational capacity of the Tajik Red Crescent Society (TRCS). This project, funded in part by a \$500,000 contribution from USAID, consists of two separate modules: institutional development and leadership training; and financial development training. To date, the former module has been completed, with an emphasis on strategic planning, decentralization and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This project is being implemented in conjunction with the Red Cross Societies of Finland and Sweden.

In addition to these projects, the American Red Cross is currently developing the following programs for Tajikistan:

Supplemental and School Feeding Program: After a coordinating mission to Central Asia in July, the American Red Cross submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) a request for 4,485 MT of wheat flour, oil, rice and nonfat whole milk. These commodities would be used to support both a supplemental feeding program for between 40,000 and 50,000 beneficiaries in western Tajikistan and a school feeding program for 49,460 children in the GBAO. The proposal was submitted on 31 August and a preliminary response is expected soon.

Emergency Medical Supply Program: Based on the findings of the Federation Assessment report, the ARC is developing a proposal to deliver needed medical supplies to hospitals in both western Tajikistan and the GBAO. As conceived in the proposal, the supplies would be delivered in standardized kits to hospitals based on the number of beds in each hospital. Kits would be delivered, and distribution monitored in conjunction with the Tajik Red Crescent.

Clothing Delivery Program: The Federation identified approximately 4,500 orphans and single parent children in the GBAO in need of clothing. After discussions with the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS) the American Red Cross has been able to obtain the necessary clothing and can expedite transportation to the region. A small grant of between \$15,000 and \$20,000 is being requested in order to cover the costs of internal transportation, storage and handling.

Conflict Mitigation Program: Tensions remain high in Tajikistan, and there exists a palpable absence of dynamic, decentralized organizations to serve as a nexus around which a nascent civil society might form. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Movement is committed to protecting human life and helping the most vulnerable. Based on its commitment to the Fundamental Principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality, the Movement does not discriminate in the course of its work. As such, impartiality and the independence from government control of its National Societies can serve as key models of non-discriminatory organizations.

The American Red Cross has developed a comprehensive program to train individuals in the United States in international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. The methodology of this program targets non-experts in the military and the general population in an effort to build awareness of the Geneva Conventions and the necessity of providing assistance based solely on the criteria of vulnerability and need.

It is the goal of the ARC to transfer this methodology to Tajikistan as part of an intensive development program designed to do the following: a) establish within the Tajik Red Crescent a strong commitment to international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions and to develop its ability to train the public in these areas; b) enhance the image of the TRCS as an independent and impartial agency giving assistance to all who need it, irrespective of ethnic, political or regional affiliation; and c) provide through the TRCS a model for non-discriminatory and decentralized organization development. A concept paper is currently in development for this project.

In addition, the American Red Cross continues to monitor economic, political and military variables in Tajikistan in an effort to provide the most useful forms of assistance.

The Outlook:

Although conditions in Tajikistan have, in general, stabilized, the effects of nearly a year of violent civil war have left a brutal legacy. The devastation of much of the country's infrastructure has left the country even further behind its neighbors than during the Soviet period. Traditionally the weakest economy in the USSR, Tajikistan's preoccupation with the civil war forced the government to postpone any significant reform policies and has resulted in significant retrenchment. A massive contraction in economic activity, rising unemployment and a rapidly shrinking tax base have left the government ill-prepared for the enormous social demands emanating from the displaced and unemployed.

The recent moves by the governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to introduce their own currencies has produced an enormous flow of old rubles into Tajikistan, the last non-Russian republic to remain in the Ruble Zone. This phenomenon has produced a rapid rise in the inflation rate, further undermining living standards and eroding purchasing power. *In essence, the acceleration of inflation has placed more individuals at risk in Tajikistan.*

Finally, although ethnic and religious identities may not have been at the heart of the Tajik civil

war, the current government campaign of coercion and retribution is giving rise to new ethnic identities and grievances. Set against the backdrop of disastrous economic performance, rising religious, ethnic and political consciousness makes a solution to the country's myriad structural problems increasingly difficult.



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The Media in Tajikistan

An analysis conducted by Internews with support from the Soros Foundations, July 1994

Introduction

This report is the result of a two-week visit to Tajikistan in late May and early June, 1994, by Eric Johnson, researcher for Internews, an American non-profit organization that aids independent television in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. The Soros Foundations provided funding for the investigation, which was aimed at acquiring a basic understanding of the media situation in Tajikistan. In all, Mr. Johnson visited nine cities (Dushanbe, Khojent, Kuliab, Chkalovsk, Ura-Tiube, Gissar, Tursun-zade, Vos'e, and Shakhriyav) and interviewed more than forty people in media, academia, business and government.

The Condition of the Media

The media in Tajikistan cannot be called free; but the kind of systematic repression practiced by the Karimov government in Uzbekistan is not the rule. Most parts of the country are still in a "survival of the fittest" mode, and media live insofar as they manage to navigate between various political forces in their region, in addition to dealing with financial difficulties which surpass even the crisis situation in other parts of Central Asia.

As is to be expected in a war zone, journalists have in a number of situations been killed in Tajikistan in the last three years, and in some cases their death is directly attributable to political repression, but in many it is not. Several TV personalities remain in prison as of this writing (mid-1994), but they are held more as political prisoners—they were well-known and vocal supporters of the revolutionaries who held the country for a short while in 1991—than journalists, and it is still not clear what their role in the bloodshed was.

The Press

Media is currently governed by Tajikistan's Law on the Press and Mass Media of December 1990, fundamentally a copy of the Soviet law of the time, considered a moderately permissive document. Registration of media is carried out under Council of Ministers' Decree #271 of the same month. Printing presses are governed by the Law on Printing Activities (*izdatel'skoi deiateľnost*).

The later years of perestroika saw the flourishing of a number of newspapers in Tajikistan (by some accounts as many as 25, though the definition of a publication is fluid and encompasses monthly single-page leaflets as well as daily newspapers), though all have ceased publishing due to both difficult economic straits as well as political pressure from various sides in the civil war and the resulting moderately dictatorial regime led by Rakhmonov.

There are a handful of government-run papers. The main national ones are the Parliament's *Narodnaia gazeta* and its Tajik- and Uzbek-language sisters *Jumhuriyat* and *Kholk ovozi*, and the Council of Minister's *Golos Tajikistana* and its Tajik- and Uzbek-language sisters *Tajikistan* and *Tajikiston ovozi* (these papers share some materials but are not identical). A number of the government newspapers acquired a certain amount of independence in the early 1990s but, as in Uzbekistan, had to turn to the government for support in 1994 when paper became so expensive as to be unaffordable. The city of Dushanbe is served by the largest-circulation newspaper in the country, *Vechernyi Dushanbe* or *Večerka* for short, created by the city government in 1992.

In late 1991, the non-governmental news agency "Novosti Tajikistana" was formed by a local journalist-turned-Party-administrator and brother of the then and present foreign minister, Akmal Alimov. It operated for about a year, trying to pay its way by selling news about Tajikistan to foreign news agencies and embassies. In October 1992 it closed down when it began to come under pressure because of certain stories which reflected poorly on one or another group in the civil conflict, as well as financial instability. Alimov soon thereafter turned his fifteen staff over to a new newspaper just getting started at the time, *Biznes i politika*.

B&P is now the only serious contender for the name "independent press" in Dushanbe. Founded by Sadrydin Mukhameddov, a local businessman, for his own prestige and advertising purposes, its official main shareholder is Mukhameddov's Sham, the largest commodity market in Dushanbe (rich by virtue of having acquired a general cotton-trading license shortly after independence). B&P's revenue does not cover costs and it is unclear how long Sham will continue to be able to sink money into it—reportedly 20 million rubles lost so far in 1994 alone.

B&P's circulation is small—officially 30,000 copies, once per week—and does not reach outside of Dushanbe.

As with *Biznes i politika*, except for several central newspapers most in the country come out only once per week due to the extreme shortage of newsprint; like its four ex-Soviet Central Asian neighbors, Tajikistan has no paper production plants of its own and few resources from which paper could be made. Thus, all paper is imported from Russia. At times the price of newsprint has risen as high as \$700 per tonne, twice the market rate in the West, and now hovers at around \$300/t. Part of the difficulty is transportation; newsprint must come through Uzbekistan by train, and Uzbekistan imposes sporadic freight blockades on Tajikistan when the latter is unable to pay for the energy Uzbekistan supplies, which is fairly often.

Another independent "newspaper," *Kur'er*, is also distributed only in the capital, but does not carry any news; it consists solely of ads, the horoscope, and TV program schedules. *Kur'er* is the only publication in the country which is commercially viable, i.e. covers its costs with revenue, because of its classified ads section.

Except for B&P and *Kur'er*, the only post-war commercial newspaper in the country was apparently *Anuron*, the brainchild of a businessman in the very small city of Gissar, to the west of Dushanbe. It operated for several years on a weekly basis but in early 1994 closed because of financial problems.

Among government-affiliated papers, *Golos Tajikistana* is regarded as moderately independent. And the capital's Russian-language paper, *Vecherka*, also has some independence by virtue of having been half-created by Mukhameddov's company Sham. Mukhameddov claims, with some justice, that he has saved the paper in several ways (politically as well as financially), and in fact it is unlikely that the very young and capable but independent-minded editor would remain in his post if the mayor were able to act without Sham's approval.

One newspaper-in-exile, *Charogh'i Ruz* (Independent Newspaper), continues to publish in Tajik from Moscow and a few copies are brought into Tajikistan clandestinely. Many have heard of it but few read it, and its limited circulation handicaps its potential effect; in any event its prime audience by all accounts is the opposition circles outside the country. I did not visit with CR's publishers, but have been told total print run is about 10,000 copies on a biweekly basis.

Outside of Dushanbe, most newspapers in the country are slowly ceasing to exist. The four oblast centers have reduced their papers to a weekly schedule and in some cases are unable to maintain even that given the difficulty of obtaining paper. Each oblast has two newspapers, one in Russian and one in Tajik (sometimes with part in Uzbek), which to some extent share information but are in fact separate. The one area of the country in slightly better shape is Khojent in the north, where the oblast paper is holding the line at three issues per week, and there is also a city-government-sponsored weekly, as well as an occasional small semi-private paper sponsored by the Saffar-ali Kendzhaev Foundation. The print run of the oblast papers is indicative of their lack of strength—usually 10,000 to 20,000 copies for oblasts with populations of over 500,000. City papers, where they exist, are smaller, at from 1000 to 5000 copies. A typical city paper is the one in Kuliab, which had 50 employees in 1988 and now has about 10.

Most raion-level newspapers have ceased publication. Even in the larger cities of Khojent (150,000) or Kuliab (70,000) the resources to sustain an independent paper are simply not there—paper, ink, journalists, and readers willing to purchase news are all insufficient. Oblast-government-supported newspapers themselves have a hard time staying afloat. Tajikistan's most powerful enterprises, however, in many cases continue to publish their own local weekly paper, known as a "*mnogotirazhka*," often in print runs of thousands; this is true for instance at the silk factory in Khojent, the carpet factory in Kairakkum, the aluminum plant in Tursun-zade, and the cotton-processing factory in Vos'e. For the employees of such mega-enterprises and the surrounding areas, these newspaper are their primary and sometimes only source of information besides television. And in many cases it is these same enterprises which support local efforts at independent television.

In the 1980s, most newspapers were distributed by subscription, but subscriptions have been reduced dramatically in the last year for several reasons. In the first place, the price newspapers (state or private) must pay to the governmental distribution service is very high, usually about 40 percent of the total cost of a newspaper, and subscribers can't afford the extra cost; this is in large part a reflection of transportation expenses, particularly gasoline. Equally important, inflation is completely unpredictable, so collecting 5000 soms or 112 tenge for a year's worth of newspapers does not cover the actual costs of printing a newspaper six months later.

Finally, the volatile financial situation in the media in general means that a newspaper cannot predict, at subscription time, whether they will be able to continue coming out on a daily or every-other-day basis, and the newspapermen are unsure what to promise subscribers when the chances are good they will have to cut back to weekly or even less-regular delivery. It is still possible to subscribe to local newspapers, but the publications find it is not in their interest and discourage subscriptions. Correspondingly, independent papers and for the most part governmental ones as well are sold almost entirely through newsstands; the independent papers also often use hawkers on the streets. If the sales price of a newspaper is not enough to cover all of its costs, it is still considered a substantial source of income; as in other republics, Tajikistan's papers reported that employees of the printing presses regularly printed thousands of unreported copies of their newspapers on paper they acquired (probably written off of government inventories as worthless "scrap") and sold them on the street for additional income.

Of a newspaper's total costs, another 30 percent is the price of paper, another 15 percent the cost of printing the newspaper, and the remaining 15 percent is used to cover salaries. Such a breakdown is fairly typical for a newspaper in Central Asia. Most well-run newspapers earn enough to cover their costs if paper is excluded, i.e. about 70 percent of their operating expenses.

When Tajikistan declared independence on 15 September 1992, the local former arm of TASS, the Soviet Union's official wire service, became the Tajikistan State News Service, *Khovar*. *Khovar* remains the only news agency in the country. It appears to serve only Gostel and a couple of the state-run papers, since none of the non-governmental press subscribes to it.

The Ministry of Press and Information has two chief duties; the first is to register and monitor all media in the country (for instance, they create weekly summaries for the country's leadership of what is printed where), while the second and larger task is to run all the government-owned printing presses in the country as well as the publishers of books and journals. As of 1 June the Ministry reports that there are 58 newspapers and five journals registered with them. Of five pending applications to register private printing presses, one has been granted.

As far as could be determined, the only printing facility in the country not completely within government control is a small breakaway in Khojent, Khuroson, which has several presses and operates on a commercial basis, for the most part printing

labels and stationery. There are two main printing presses in Dushanbe, the Poligrafkombinat (also known as City Press No. 1) and the larger and better-equipped former Party Press which prints most of the country's papers. The Iranians are said to have been investing in the Poligrafkombinat with the aim of printing children's books and a journal.

State TV and the Pending TV Law

In the urban areas of Tajikistan, viewers usually have access to four TV channels: Ostankino and Russian TV (both from Moscow), Tashkent TV from Uzbekistan (beginning at 6 pm), and Dushanbe TV (the Tajik national channel) produced by the State TV & Radio Committee (Gosteleradiokomitte, or Gostel for short). Of the five administrative sections (oblasts) in the country, three have a regional division of Gostel in their administrative center, using up to one hour per day of Dushanbe TV's air time locally for their own programming. They are in Khojent, Kurgan-Tiube, and Khorog. In many areas of the country, however, the air time provided to Ostankino and Russian TV is decreasing, both because transmitters are breaking and the country simply cannot afford to maintain the network of transmission facilities.

The head Gostel organization in Dushanbe has about 1500 employees and produces about half of the twelve hours of programming per day that it broadcasts to the entire country, as well as several national radio channels. Most is in Tajik, with smaller amounts in Russian and Uzbek. Gostel has a few pieces of Betacam equipment and works for the most part on S-VHS in PAL, though like everywhere else in the former Soviet Union, TV broadcasting uses the SECAM standard.

Gostel in Tajikistan is heavily political, and its chief changes as often as the political winds shift. In late 1992, Gostel Chair Murakhimov was arrested—ostensibly for taking TV equipment and tapes to Kyrgyzstan that proved wrongdoing on the part of government leaders—along with three other TV officials and journalists, and held without charge since then with little news of their disappearance.

Murakhimov was replaced by Ikromov, a protégé of former PM Abduladzhonov; when the latter fell, Ikromov did too, and they left Dushanbe for their northern home of Khojent. Next on the chopping block as Gostel Chair was Safullaev, who lasted only as long as the political godfather who appointed him, the present chair, Usmonov, has been in his position since May 1994. When asked his accomplishments as Gostel deputy chief and now chief, he notes that "we have taught people to speak carefully, since we

found out TV can so easily be used for war." Although Usmonov is from Khojent, State TV is firmly in the hands of the Kuliab now through the chief of the TV studios, a former commander of Kuliabi troops during the civil war.

A proposal in 1993 from then-PM Abduladzhonov, Council of Ministers chief of staff Alunov, and the Ministers of Press and Communications to augment Gostel's weak TV lineup with programming from Turkey, Iran, England, and possibly the US (each country under certain conditions is said to have volunteered to provide some satellite reception equipment) was reportedly turned down by Rakhmonov. But Gostel does have a dish from the Iranians and receives programming from at least the three major foreign satellites which cover the area—Asiasat 1, Intelsat 505, and sometimes Arabsat I—but does not use their programs on the air.

On 21 February 1994 Parliament Chair Rakhmonov signed a succinct "temporary" decree, number 220, which forbade the activity of any non-Gostel electronic media—closing down the several dozen independent TV stations in the republic—until the acceptance of a new "Law on TV," which the Council of Ministers was instructed to draw up. At the same time, Rakhmonov announced that he would take direct control of Gostel, but he was unable to have himself confirmed as Gostel Chair by the parliament, and Usmonov was named. At first meeting Usmonov seems a quiet and kind-hearted man, but he spares no effort as an apologist of the current regime and has close ties with the Council of Ministers. (The chief of Gostel is not to be confused with another Usmonov with the same last name, who is the Minister of Communications.)

Different opinions exist on why the February decree was signed, the only one like it in the NIS, but there is no doubt that the growing strength of the country's two main independent TV stations, Somonen in Dushanbe and Temurnalik in Khojent, caused a certain amount of fear in the country's leadership. This stems from the fact that Somonen is supported by the Dushanbe city government, and Temurnalik is a child of Khamidov, one of Khojent's most powerful industrialists and a close friend of the powerful Abduladzhonov family; both backers are potential competitors for power in the country. It is also true that the independent TV stations compete with Gostel stations for scarce revenue in the advertising market, and are considerably more successful at it.

Another valid but less important reason is the invasion of Western morality through films on the independent TV stations, Rakhmonov is a former collective farm chair and not an intellectual, and it is

easy to imagine him reacting heavily-handedly to complaints from some of the more conservative sectors of society. In spite of his fear of Islamic fundamentalism and its potential to usurp the ruling elite's privileges, he cannot afford to alienate the predominantly Muslim population, and the non-governmental TV stations provided a convenient and powerless scapegoat. Finally, the government cites the valid but somewhat specious justification that most of the independents' programming fare is unlicensed, and the Tajik government could be held liable under international conventions for its inability to enforce copyright law.

As a result of the February decree, the Council of Ministers in turn ordered Gostel to submit a proposed Law on TV within three months. It did so in May 1994, and the draft is now under consideration by the Council of Ministers. The 42-page draft law is wordy in the extreme and in essence accords to the government and Gostel total control over television in the country through such phrases as the sentence in Article 6 that asserts that Gostel shall run "city and raion studios," which includes at least in the letter of the law almost all existing "non-governmental" TV stations in the country. (The TV Law will augment an existing Law on Communications, which governs the activity of the Ministry of Communications but does not specifically address television issues.) But the law does not prohibit independent electronic media.

The law also asserts that any TV organizations must register and have their programming plans approved by Gostel; and that Gostel has the right to close down stations if they violate this (vaguely worded) law. However, the law contains a number of good ideas (for instance according equal air time to candidates during pre-election campaigns) and with some reworking could be a functional and democratic piece of legislation.

The draft TV law is now (July 1994) still under review in the Council of Ministers, where in particular the Ministries of Communications (MinSviaz) and of Finance (MinFin) at the very least will have objections to provisions which transfer existing television transmitters from MinSviaz to Gostel and which allow Gostel to earn money from advertisements while being supported by the government budget.

(Part of the contention around the issue of transmitters, not only in Tajikistan but in other NIS republics as well, is that most of the cost of television in the Central Asian countries is sustaining the transmitter network. And much of that expense is increasingly borne by Russia, which is reportedly paying large

sums to maintain broadcast of Ostankino throughout the NIS. Thus, transmitters are, paradoxically, a cash cow for the ministry which controls them.)

After the Council of Ministers passes on the legislation, the Tajikistan Parliament is likely to approve it in whole since Parliament does not as a rule alter documents provided by the Council. Parliament meets for a week or two every four to six months, and may meet as early as September or as late as December. If the TV law is not sent to the Parliament in 1994, it may not be examined until after elections next year.

There is presently a window of opportunity during which a Western telecommunications specialist sent to consult with the Tajik Council of Ministers could have an impact on the draft TV law. Very little information is available to those discussing the law, and while Gostel chief Usmonov did visit the US on a USIA program and participated in a UNESCO program in Kuala Lumpur, he as well as others involved in creating the final draft have little ability to foresee the consequences of their legislation and no experience in writing coherent and enforceable legislation.

Such legislation may be passed during fall 1994, but if it is not, it will have to wait for a new parliament, which is not likely to meet until after the as-yet-unscheduled elections. This would preclude the use of the non-governmental TV stations during the pre-election campaign, which is one of the reasons the government has banned their existence. The other reason, according to some, is the pernicious moral effect they have by showing programs which feature violence and sex. The non-governmental stations, of course, deny showing such programs, and in some cases have gone so far as to pledge not to show any foreign programming at all if allowed back on the air. All assert that when they showed foreign films, they cut out the scenes with nudity or "excessive" violence.

The Ministry of Communications' department responsible for licensing frequencies for broadcasting use (the GIE, or State Electromunications Inspectorate) has drawn up draft provisions to govern issuance of such licenses, but again these provisions are ideas from local bureaucrats who admitted to having little information on which to base their work. They have been invited by their counterparts in Russia to take part in an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development project to aid the NIS governments in frequency management, but they do not have the money to attend the seminars offered in Moscow and Minsk, and as a result the smaller, more distant countries

such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan tend to be forgotten by the larger central republics in such joint projects. The GIE does not even have a computer and therefore has no way reliably to track existing frequency use in Tajikistan, not to mention undertake necessary calculations to allow new broadcasters to go on the air; previously all such work was done at the Moscow Institute of Radio-Wave Research.

Independent TV

In 1990, the first non-Gostel TV groups began to appear (the first known one in Ura-Tiube, in Lenabad oblast), either using government-owned transmitters, building small cable systems, or constructing their own very low-power TV transmitters. Most of the more notable broadcasters received support from city governments. These include groups in Khojent, Pendzhikent, and Kuliab. Throughout the country there are at least twenty such on-air systems, at least four of which have amateur S-VHS equipment and editing controllers, with which journalists can create programs of more acceptable quality for broadcast than the VHS home camcorders and deck-to-deck editing used by most stations.

With respect to the government's claim that Western films corrupt the morality of Tajiks, it is interesting to note that almost without exception, independent stations in Tajikistan cited local police departments to bolster their claim to legitimacy. They quoted statistics that the incidence of petty crime in their respective cities (laid at the feet of restless youth, as a rule) dropped dramatically—usually by about two-thirds—when the commercial TV station and its Western programming appeared on the air, and claimed that this corresponded to more young people watching TV instead of being "hooligans."

In Dushanbe, the only non-Gostel TV player is Somonen, the latest in a series of metamorphoses—first Ekran, then Bakhtor—through which a small group of Gostel TV folk, beginning in 1989, exited the state TV system, desiring both profit and independence. Somonen is presently run by four people, and counts as its founders the Dushanbe City Government, the Union of Youth of Tajikistan (the former Komsomol), and the city "cultural associations" of a number of other nationalities, which give the company additional legitimacy. The station was created with a SUR 50 M credit from Somon-Bank in August 1993, and the need to repay that credit in 1994 may mean the end of the station if the moratorium on its operation continues

Somonen went on the air in September 1993 using the Taslikent channel's unused transmitter time in Dushanbe, from 09.00 to 17.00 on channel 7. With up to an hour per day of their own production, they began trying to produce daily news, alternating in Uzbek, Tajik, and Russian; the quality of the news is about average for such new stations, but the effort is there. A particularly nasty problem in Dushanbe is the almost total lack of transport, making newsgathering even more difficult than usual, since gasoline must be imported from Uzbekistan and is very expensive (on the order of \$1/gallon)—although Somonen does have a vehicle.

When the February decree closed Somonen, it had about sixty employees and worked on S-VHS with five decks, two edit controllers, two S-VHS cameras, and several VHS camcorders; one camera is broken and they have had to sell one of the S-VHS cameras to stay alive since being closed. (Like many independents, they did most of their shooting on VHS because of a lack of S-VHS cassettes.) They also had a U-matic deck provided by the Iramans, which the latter immediately reclaimed when the station closed. They have no satellite reception equipment, but such equipment is widely available at a cost of \$600 to \$1000 for a 2-m installation. Somonen has been visited by UNESCO's regional media person, Martin Hadlow (based in Kuala Lumpur), who has made what Somonen claims to be a commitment to finance them with a \$90,000 grant, but Somonen's director, Mirzoev, is prone to overstatement, so this needs to be confirmed.

In Khojent, there are two non-Gostel TV groups which have a powerful channel all to themselves. They are both sponsored by powerful organizations and therefore were successful in convincing the local transmitting station to move Russian TV to a UHF frequency, freeing up a VHF frequency and transmitter for their joint use. Dzhaikhon-oro is sponsored by the city government and works on VHS. Temurnalik is the child of a seven-million-ruble investment from a large food processing plant in Kairakkum (near Khojent) with the same name, run by Khamidov, the former head of the oblast. Temurnalik works on equipment purchased in 1991 when the ruble was still worth something provided it was converted into hard currency through official channels. Until the February decree, they had 21 employees working on two S-VHS cameras, four VHS cameras, and one S-VHS edit desk, and were on the air for four hours daily. They produced 7-10 minutes of news daily, alternating days in Uzbek, Tajik, and Russian. Both Dzhaikhon-oro and Temurnalik installed their own microwave relay equipment from their respective studios to the single

broadcast tower in town, and are thus able to go on the air live. Temurnalik has a satellite dish.

Other non-Gostel TV organizations exist in all the cities visited on this research trip to one extent or another. They varied greatly: some had satellite dishes, some were interested in news, some used government transmitters. A typical station had a 10- to 100-watt transmitter of its own, ten to twenty employees, and broadcast in the evenings for about four hours, of which about one hour was its own production. In all cases they had ceased transmitting in February, but in several locations (Vos'e, Tursunzade, and Ura-Tiube) they reinstituted broadcasts in a limited manner in May when it became clear the federal government was not in a hurry to pass the TV law which would legitimize their operation. So far, those which have returned to the air seem to operate outside the law but without retribution. The Kuliab station has exploited its connections with the chief of the national TV station to become a "temporary regional Gostel" and thus acquire 45 minutes of air time per week on the national channel.

In all cases, these very small independent TV stations did not operate on a footing which allow them to cover their costs with revenues. They existed either on pure enthusiasm or on subsidies from city governments, local businesses, or other commercial activities. The bulk of their broadcasts are pirated programs from either satellites or Western videocassettes imported through Moscow. Such locally-produced programs as exist (outside of Khojent and Dushanbe) tend to be paid programming sponsored by a local collective farm or factory so that a work collective can see itself on the air.

As a result of discussions during this research trip, Somonen has proposed the creation of a Tajik national association of non-Gostel TV companies and has invited about five stations to help create the organization. But because telephone contact with Dushanbe from the US is spotty at best, it is not known whether these efforts have progressed beyond the stage of ideas. Somonen has an IBM-compatible PC, so Internews provided them with a modem and an e-mail subscription, but they are not yet on line.

Cable TV also appeared in about 1989 in cities with concentrations of apartment buildings, most notably Dushanbe, Khojent, and Chkalovsk, a Russian-dominated satellite town of Khojent. These are usually minuscule operations serving several apartment buildings. At its zenith, the cable TV movement included perhaps thirty small cable networks in the country. The two major cable stations in Dushanbe, which used to have up to 50,000 sub-

scribers each, are said to be shut down—one because of the war and one because of the February decree—but some in the north are still operating. Like cable stations elsewhere in the NIS, they rely heavily on foreign movies and produce little or none of their own programming. In Chkalovsk the cable TV still operates but does not produce any of its own programs.

In November 1993 Karimzhan Akhmedov, a Deputy Minister of Economics, created the "Center for Strategic Research," believing that the government needed a research arm to provide reliable information about goings-on in the country, but it has not been funded. In the name of the Center, in early 1994 Mr. Akhmedov provided a short proposal to USAID requesting about \$132,000 to create a local "independent" TV station; most of the money would be used to purchase professional S-VHS equipment.

A meeting with Mr. Akhmedov produced a very favorable impression of a young well-educated man able, if anyone is, to help bridge the gap of understanding between Western democracy, Soviet power elites, and Tajikistan's more traditional social structures. Creation of such a station would certainly require protection from high levels of the government. Moreover, though Akhmedov would like to act as a sort of godfather for the plan, he does not desire to control the prospective station. But he seems to have no clear idea where the all-important personnel would come from for such an organization, and has little concept of the logistical hurdles it would face. In any case, Akhmedov himself admits that until the current decree forbidding non-Gostel TV is lifted, no steps can be taken in this direction, and although the Council of Ministers has provided approval for his proposal to create a station, it has also expressly forbidden realization of the plan until the TV Law is passed.

Radio

Central Gostel produces at least one national radio channel which is broadcast throughout the country, and each of the three oblast Gostel organizations replaces several hours per week of central radio with their own local programming. There are no non-governmental radio organizations in the country. There is a group in Khogent which is interested in creating a radio station, but like the independent TV stations, they are hampered by the February decree prohibiting commercial electronic media.

Whither Tajikistan's Media?

Tajikistan is in shambles in any sense of the word and it must be understood that the mass media affects people only in the most primitive ways. Newspapers cannot be widely enough distributed to be very effective and television is considered a state resource and is fairly tightly controlled by the government.

The ruling structures, while not openly repressive toward the media, are not democratic, and traditions will not develop any time soon which could allow the media to become a "fourth estate." Newsprint is expensive and will not become any more available in the near future, energy and money will continue to be tools in the hands of Tajikistan's neighbors, and no one is likely to pour money into creating quality television when there is no money to be made at it.

This is not to say that media assistance is hopeless, far from it. Rather, it must be undertaken with an understanding that the starting point for media work in Tajikistan is considerably further from the Western values and concepts of the media's role in society than in other NIS countries. Independent radio, more so than in other republics, offers an ideal opportunity for cheap and effective media work, particularly outside of Dushanbe and on the border with Uzbekistan, where information is much more tightly controlled. As elsewhere in Central Asia, economic problems are the most pressing ones which any independent media organization faces, and failing to address them means almost certain failure for any new ventures.

And as in other NIS republics, TV offers the most effective way of influencing a large number of people to receive, consider, and act upon information in new ways. The surprising proliferation of small local TV stations is indicative of both a recognition that it is the main source of entertainment and information for most of the population and a desire on the part of both old and new power elites to control that information flow.

Additional information

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**Statement of Arthur C. Helton, Director of Migration Programs,
Open Society Institute, New York, New York**

**Submitted to the
Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs**

I write to submit a statement for the record of these hearings regarding Tajikistan. I am Director of Migration Programs at the Open Society Institute (OSI), with offices in New York City. The OSI, part of the Soros Foundations Network, is an operating foundation working to promote civil society and human rights. The focus of our Forced Migration Projects are those persons who have or may become displaced in or from the countries of the former Soviet Union. We investigate and report on the conditions of refugees and displaced persons, and seek to promote, where appropriate, their voluntary and safe repatriation. The Forced Migration Projects monitor circumstances in order to give early warning of forced movements and to identify conditions which may cause such dislocations. We encourage early and effective humanitarian response to migration emergencies and advocate humane treatment of those unable to return. Ideally, the Forced Migration Projects seek to promote measures that avert the need of individuals to flee.

In sum, given the recent escalation in the conflict, we urge the United Nations (1) to establish a mechanism to review whether repatriation should continue to be promoted for the residual population of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan and (2) to prepare a plan to deal with any additional new displacement. Also, efforts should be undertaken to ensure that Tajik asylum seekers in Afghanistan and those Tajiks who have repatriated are effectively protected and assisted in accordance with minimum international standard. Adequate resources should be made available by the international community to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of repatriating Tajik refugees.

Thousands of Tajiks fled their homes in 1992, when a civil war broke out. Historically, the poorest of the former Soviet Republics, Tajikistan was most vulnerable to disturbance. Not long after independence was declared in September 1991, clashes occurred

between regional factions supporting the Communist government and an opposition coalition (consisting of Islamic and democratic political parties). The opposition succeeded in ousting the Communists from power, declaring as its goal the establishment in Tajikistan of a moderate, democratic, Islamic state. However, in December 1992, the former-Communist led government again occupied the capital and, in the following weeks, hundreds of people were detained and "disappeared," and are believed to have been extrajudicially executed.

The nature of the conflict in Tajikistan is ethnic and regional as well as ideological. The summary executions which followed the Communists' return to power were directed primarily against persons from the Pamir and Garm districts. The ideological lines of the conflict began to blur somewhat as each of the four distinct Tajik regions formed its own military cohort. In a country desperately poor before the conflict, the fighting brought utter devastation of infrastructure. The conflict has killed at least 20,000 people and driven an estimated 500,000 from their homes.

Since 1993, refugees have been returning to Tajikistan from Afghanistan, where many of them sought refuge, as well as the Russian Federation and other countries. Tens of thousands of Tajik refugees live in camps along the northern border of Afghanistan. By the summer of 1994, approximately 300,000 refugees had returned.

The government and the political opposition have discussed the return of the refugees and have made informal agreements to work together to ensure their safety. Both sides now see the refugee repatriation issue as one of the major points of the negotiations. In January 1994, the Tajik authorities appealed directly to refugees to return home. The implication was that even those who had fled due to political reasons would be safely accepted back. However, it was not clear whether those who had actually fought with the insurgents, and not merely sympathized with them, would likewise be forgiven.

There is a great deal of concern for the safety of those returning currently. Many have travelled through the capital, Dushanbe, and resettled in the southern regions of Tajikistan where, despite recent initiatives by both sides for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, armed clashes are still taking place.

In fact the fighting has recently intensified. While originally the increased fighting was confined to the Afghan-Tajik border, in July it spread deeper into the countryside. This conflict clearly could endanger

returning refugees. Paramilitary groups operating in Tajikistan continue to resist being disarmed. Tajik rebel groups based in Afghanistan periodically attempt to cross the border into Tajikistan. There are some 25,000 Russian peacekeeping troops, and they have been clashing increasingly with insurgents.

The political situation is unstable. While talks between the government and the opposition are being pursued haltingly, the Tajik government is still moving ahead with the passage of a new constitution and elections, now scheduled in November which would exclude the opposition. While talks have been taking place for some time, the armed faction of the opposition (which does not always act in concert with the political faction) has only recently declared its willingness to participate in the dialogue.

Additionally, seething ethnic and political discord, concentrated in the areas from which the refugees originally fled, have forced those returning to confront the risk of violence upon their return. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has noted this problem and said that measures are being taken to ensure the returnees safety. It is not clear, however, how such protection could be guaranteed. The government has taken steps to guard the villages of the returnees, but they remain vulnerable.

To a large extent the returnees are women, children and older men. According to accounts of refugees, the younger men fear to return because they might be persecuted as rebel fighters (either perceived or actual). The government has, in some cases, provided wood for building homes; but as there are no young men, much of the material remains unused. Additionally, government guards are viewed by many as possible informers whose purpose is not to protect but rather to apprehend young men should they decide to return to their villages.

Tajik authorities claim that refugees expressing a willingness to return have been threatened. Additionally, international organizations working in Sher Khan Bundar, an Afghan border town where some Tajik refugees reside in transit camps, have been threatened by extremists. The goal, as expressed by one of the Islamic groups in a direct appeal to the refugees is for them to refuse to return until an Islamic state has been established in Tajikistan. Tajik government authorities are calling on all parties, particularly Afghanistan, to bring such extremists to justice and ensure the safety of the refugees. However, they continue to face threats of violence.

Also of great concern is the economic situation inside Tajikistan. If the remaining refugees return this year, unemployment in Tajikistan would double (1.5 million unemployed out of a population of 5.6 million). Under such severe circumstances, an aggressive promotional effort concerning repatriation may be unwise absent adequate arrangements for rehabilitation of infrastructure and developments. However, government authorities are adamant about their goal of returning all Tajiks to their homes expeditiously.

In the spring of 1993, the United Nations appealed for \$20 million to help resettle refugees and displaced persons in Tajikistan. However, little of the money committed by various countries in response to the appeal has actually been received.

There are a number of guiding principles to which those organizations involved in repatriation in deciding whether return is in fact the most appropriate course of action in a particular circumstance. These principles apply when considering any repatriation plan of any organization.

Most importantly, repatriation should not be promoted unless all countries involved can ensure protection of and respect for the basic human rights of refugees; nor should refugees be returned to any country where they would face persecution.

Before promoting repatriation, it must be established that the conflict which caused the refugees to flee has abated and that there is no realistic likelihood of recurrence of the human rights abuses which precipitated flight. Particular emphasis should be placed on the unique needs for protection of women and children.

In all cases, refugee repatriation must be voluntary and should only be promoted if it can be accomplished in a manner that ensures safety and dignity upon return. It is important that UNHCR be involved as an integral force in the repatriation effort, in order to facilitate refugee protection. Also, non-governmental organizations should have access to the refugees. These organizations are often less constrained by diplomacy and can perform certain functions which UNHCR cannot.

About six months ago, it appeared that the Tajik conflict, while unresolved, had begun to abate. In recent months, however, the insurgent forces have intensified attacks. In light of these developments, the repatriation effort should be re-examined. While the governments of Tajikistan and Afghanistan as well as the Russian troops on the border

have pledged to protect the refugees, they are unable to guarantee their safety concretely.

While both UNHCR and other non-government organizations are working closely with the refugees, even the most basic needs of food and shelter are not being fully met. Additionally, both women and children remain particularly vulnerable. Adequate and effective measures of protection and assistance must be provided.



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